CHRONICLES OF
# CULTURE
LETTERS & ARTS MORALS & MANNERS

Fred Chappell
Paul Gottfried
Otto Scott
Clyde Wilson

## The Old Federalism

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# WHY ANOTHER MAGAZINE OF IDEAS?

Leopold Tyrmand founded *Chronicles* in 1977 to provide a conservative and "value-oriented criticism" of arts and letters, morals and manners. From the very first, Tyrmand's *Chronicles* exposed the pretentions of the radical chic culture and subjected the permissive, "anything goes" world view of liberalism to an eloquent and withering scorn. Under his editorship, the magazine published such distinguished writers and scholars as Robert Nisbet, Jorge Borges, James Burnham, and Lev Navrozov, as well as provided an opportunity for younger journalists and writers to grapple with serious ideas. This great work of Tyrmand's may turn out to be his most enduring legacy, and all the efforts of his successors will be directed to realizing the dreams he had for the magazine.

The dream is to articulate a positive vision of American culture. This means we are aiming at more than a critique of intellectual fashions. It will be our duty to reform as well as criticize, construct as well as attack. But truth is an elusive phenomenon which, as Plato realized, was more likely to emerge from a spirited discussion than from a doctrinaire sermon.

Revolutions do not begin with the masses or even with leaders of political movements. Every important revolution of modern times was hatched in intellectual discussions a full generation before a shot was fired. The Russian Revolution of 1917 would have been impossible if it had not been preceded by 150 years of speculation on the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege. The "rebellion" of the 1960's was prepared in advance by all the novelists, professors, and journalists who succeeded in implanting their vision of life into a whole generation of young men and women. In the closing years of the 20th century, America is faced with problems of the greatest magnitude. There is a growing convergence of science, religion, ethics, politics, and economics on fundamental questions, and yet the implications of current research are rarely discussed and, if so, it is only from a perspective that is hostile to the tradition of the U.S. and of the civilized West.

The major problem with the American intellectual establishment is its exclusiveness. There is a whole realm of ideas and opinions which simply cannot be discussed in the pages of major organs of opinions. Issues involving the family, the defense of the nation, and the free market are usually seen from only one perspective. As one early *Chronicles* editorial expressed it, "a variety of ideas is necessary to make American culture once again a home for everybody." We must be prepared to confront ideas head-on, and to set aside ideological squabbles in the common pursuit of wisdom. There are serious scholars, scientists, and writers in the world today who, in their novels and monographs, are contributing to what Robert Hutchins once called "the great conversation," but there is really no forum where they can address each other and work out their ideas in the common language of ordinary English. The world of ideas is divided into feuding specialties and ideologies. As a result, it can take a decade or more for a major intellectual revolution to reach the general literate public, and when it does, the issues may by then be clouded over by irrelevant political considerations. A magazine like *Chronicles* can be the forum for engaging that great conversation and, what is more, it will allow the reading public to listen in.

Perhaps the biggest difference between liberals and conservatives in America is the degree to which the two camps are willing to pursue the truth with honesty and freedom from ideological coercion. Conservatives do not fear the truth. But if we are open to debate, that does not mean we are without firm principles. An openness to new ideas and opinions is in itself a statement of belief which many Marxists and their allies will find highly offensive. Truth is, for them, whatever serves to advance their political cause. In fact, a fair-minded and honest discussion cannot be conducted with those who do not recognize honesty as a virtue and who refuse to abide by the rules of civilized discourse. To that extent, we must be exclusive.

There is another sense also in which *Chronicles* cannot be entirely "open." It is our aim to affirm certain basic principles which have been obscured by ideological fashions and pragmatic preoccupations. Among those principles are the foundations of our society in family and community, and the recognition of a transcendent and unchanging foundation for our moral life. Our first order of business in pursuing an editorial policy must be to work out the implications of these principles for modern life. What is more, the peculiar condition of our American and European society is that we live in a free society. The basis of that freedom is imperiled not only by those who seek to destroy our way of life or overthrow our governments. A more serious threat is mounted by the consistent ideological attack on civility, moral decency, and artistic standards which continues to be made by the cultural elites in universities and influential journals of opinion. cc

Thomas Fleming



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# FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY

Everyone wants to save the American family. Not a day goes by, it seems, without some politician or professor issuing a call to arms or an invitation to a congressional hearing. For a long time the family had been a conservative/Republican issue, but last fall both Mr. Mondale and Ms. Ferraro made a great show of their own wholesome domestic life—it worked better with the Mondales than with the Zaccaros. What a world. We are back to the old political slogans of mom and apple pie, and they have even less substance than they did back in the 1940's.

We were not always so unanimous in support for motherhood and the nuclear family. In the years between the Eisenhower Administration and the Reagan restoration, most of what we heard about the family was unpleasant. Psychiatrists described it as the setting for Oedipal traumata; leftist social critics spoke continually of the alienation and loneliness which is the heritage of bourgeois domesticity; while feminists and homosexuals complained of the ruthless indoctrination into the ideology of sex roles and patriarchy. The family was ailing, they all agreed, and the kindest treatment was to bury the dead and erect new social structures on the foundations of equality and sensitivity.

Radical feminists continue to cling to the 60's golden dreams—a society of hermaphrodites—but no one seems to be listening. Instead, the political remnants of the committed left are studying ways to save the family. Senator Chris Dodd can be seen practically joining hands with Senator Denton in a common front, and recently Harvard was haunted by one of its ghosts from the 60's, Pat Moynihan, whose Godkin lectures are a replay of his 1965 demand for a national policy that will "promote the stability of the American family."

Before being overcome by this rush of good feeling, American families—that is to say, most Americans—need to consider what it is the planners and politicians intend to save us from, since most of us see the government not as the solution but as the main source of the problem. Predictably, most of the discussion centers around welfare issues: aid to pregnant women, family assistance programs, and the prevention of family violence. Obviously, these are all good things. No decent person enjoys the idea of battered children or starving expectant mothers, but not all problems cry out for government solutions; the remedies, as Tacitus suggested, can be worse than the disease. Most Americans favored civil rights for Blacks and women, but were less than enthusiastic about busing and affirmative action. What exactly do the friends of the family have in mind?

One sure sign of danger in the family issue is the frequent mention of rights: pregnant women have a *right* to adequate nutrition; children have a *right* to be reared in a wholesome environment and to receive a good education. As Senator Dodd explained to the *New York Times*, "There is a direct relationship between a child's educational performance and nutrition." Set aside the lack of evidence for the senator's assertion and look at his overall commitments—to "human rights" in El Salvador and to equality in the U.S. What he and the other equal rights advocates seem to be driving at is this: government, whether state or Federal, must undertake to guarantee a good start in life for all our citizens. A malnourished or abused child grows into a poor student who grows up into an adult social problem, an unemployed illiterate, condemned to live on welfare and vote for Chris Dodd. The goal is equality, and the only way to provide equality of opportunity, so they tell us, is to guarantee a roughly equal start for everyone. Here we come to the heart of the matter. Some parents work hard, take their children to church, encourage them to read—in short, do their best

*(continued on page 34)*



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# Powder Puffs & Loose Peanuts *by Fred Chappell*

*"It is a hard task to treat what is common in a way of your own."*

—Horace

**Jill McCorkle: *The Cheer Leader*; Algonquin Books; Chapel Hill, NC; $15.95.**

**Jill McCorkle: *July 7th*; Algonquin Books; Chapel Hill, NC; $17.95.**

Louis Rubin is easily the most respected and celebrated scholar of modern Southern literature, but it will never be said of him that he was a timid academic. The founding of a new publishing house, Algonquin Books, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina —a long way from New York City —was an act of steely courage alloyed with sheer brass.

He's a gambling man, Rubin, and, as if to underscore this truth, he brought out two first novels by the same author at the same time. Didn't publish one and wait to see how it was received. No letter went out saying, "Sorry, Jill, but sales of *The Cheer Leader* were not strong enough to warrant publication of *July 7th*." He rolled them bones and came up flush. The McCorkle books have enjoyed both critical and commercial success.

It's more than luck, though. Rubin has a discerning eye for certain qualities in Southern writing: freshness, humor, sharply drawn characters, authentic detail and plenty of it, and a sly toughness of observation. His own fiction exhibits these qualities, and he has encouraged them in the students in his creative-writing classes. Among literary partisans of the South, Rubin has got to be one of the least sentimental in his tastes.

And that's a good thing because Rubin is now in a position to become one of the most influential shapers of the destiny of Southern letters. Algonquin books get good national distribution to the shops and haul down reviews in the important national journals. There has probably never been another Southern trade publishing house with such consistent advantage. Too bad that Algonquin didn't come into existence a bit sooner; it would have been the ideal house for writers like William Goyen, Eve Shelnutt, and Heather Ross Miller.

But let us be thankful for what we have. *The Cheer Leader* and *July 7th* well deserve their success and celebrity, and surely nothing will detract from these if we observe that both novels fit comfortably into the newest tradition in Southern fiction, a tradition that might be described as being fetched out of Leota's purse.

Leota, of course, is the garrulous beautician in Eudora Welty's short story "Petrified Man." That story opens with Leota asking her customer, Mrs. Fletcher, to get a cigarette out of Leota's purse.

> Mrs. Fletcher gladly reached over to the lavender shelf under the lavender-framed mirror, shook a hair net loose from the clasp of the patent-leather bag, and slapped her hand down quickly on a powder puff which burst out when the purse was opened.
>
> 'Why, look at the peanuts, Leota!' said Mrs. Fletcher in her marveling voice.
>
> 'Honey, them goobers has been in my purse a week if they's been in it a day. Mrs. Pike bought them peanuts.'

It's all there, the pungent and faintly repugnant detail, the belligerent vulgarity, the relentless concern with minutiae, the extremely close focus, the sincerely ugly tackiness. It is all expressive, gives us a world of information about lower-middle-class values as well as about individual personalities, and sets a raucous and slightly irritating comic tone.

Miss Welty didn't exactly invent this kind of writing, but she has done it so well that we find its influence widespread in the current generation of female Southern writers. Flannery O'Connor could do this sort of thing to perfection, and so can Bobbie Ann Mason, Anne Tyler, Joan Williams, Lee Zacharias, Lee Smith, Candace Flynt, and—Jill McCorkle.

Here, for a random example, is only part of a paragraph from *July 7th*:

> It had gotten to where all of her days and nights were near about the same—get up and go to Hair Today Gone Tomorrow where she is the owner and fully trained electrologist, perform her time-consuming, tedious professional skill, then come home and wait around for Harold, who very rarely showed up in time for dinner. Then by the time that Harold, Jr. (who looks just like big Harold except for the fact that he's a little jug-eared) was sound asleep with his little plastic E.T. doll watching over him from the night stand, and Patricia was asleep with her transistor radio blaring away beneath her pillow, she was pooped out, too pooped to sleep actually, and she'd say 'loping through la la land with Juanita Suggs Weeks.'

*Fred Chappell is a novelist and co-winner of the 1985 Bollingen Poetry Prize. His most recent book is* I Am One of You Forever *(LSU).*



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But there is a singular and important difference between the way Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor employ such accurately tedious detail and the way our later novelists use it. In Welty and O'Connor the intention is clearly satiric; the reader is expected to judge the taste, intelligence, and ethical values of the characters by the inescapable trashiness of their daily lives and to find them lacking. Tacky detail depicted moral morons or moral innocents.

But when we come to Smith and Zacharias, and especially to Jill McCorkle, the purpose has changed from satire to what we might regard as a sort of photorealism. These K-Mart details are no longer comically indicative; they are the ultimate terms in which these petty lives are lived. Cellophaned sandwiches, Conway Twitty songs, "beaver books," women's day-glo slacks do not now distinguish even economic classes; the poor and the wealthy alike inhabit a cultural penury as bleak as any Siberia. Satiric tone diminishes when such objects are depicted as ends in themselves because they become impervious to judgment, unless the authors clearly mean to condescend—as the new writers carefully do not.

Is it possible that the newest Southern fiction is the first truly classless literature in America? Traditional Southern literature, represented in modern times by writers like Faulkner, Warren, Ellen Glasgow, and Peter Taylor, was finely class conscious. Class consciousness was one of its main strengths, and one which allied it with traditional European literature, with the classical novel of manners. And quite apart from economics, the existence of a spiritual aristocracy was acknowledged; there is nobility in some of Faulkner's poor Blacks as well as in some of his wealthy planters.

The new books describe no spiritual nobility whatsoever. Certainly Jill McCorkle describes none. The closest she comes—and it is a long way off—is in the drawing of a simple "nice guy" like Pat Reeves in *The Cheer Leader*. But even the "nice" people in McCorkle's work share in the schlock cultural values of all the other not-so-nice people, and it is difficult to see how they manage to come by their minor but basic decencies.

This depiction depends upon a relentless cynicism, as if the author approves, or has at least accepted, the morality of her characters. The teenaged murderers in *July 7th* get off scot-free not because they belong to prominent families, but because nobody gives a damn who lives or dies. Jo Spencer, the one literate character in either novel, we are supposed to see as crazy. Lee Smith says that "Jill McCorkle has left the old stereotypes dead under the magnolias," but *The Cheer Leader*—which is dangerously close in conception and treatment to Smith's own *Black Mountain Breakdown*—comes near, with its new but immediately recognizable characterizations, to an easy use of current stereotypes. Our present generation of novelists is building condominiums on *Tobacco Road*.

But as long as the approach is new, it's pretty fresh, and McCorkle is enormously skillful with it. Her first books are already expert, and if she can learn to treat her characters in their spiritual and intellectual aspects, she has an important future. But we will have to see if she believes these aspects exist.

Algonquin Books is the best possible place to watch her development. cc

## BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

*Assessing Strategic Defense: Six Roundtable Discussions*; edited by W. Bruce Weinrod; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC; $8.00. Leading authorities on defense technology, foreign policy, and arms control debate the problems and promises in the President's plans to shift American defense doctrine away from Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) and towards a Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

*Center Journal*; edited by Kerry J. Koller; Winter 1984; $16.00 per year. A journal of Christian commitment wide-ranging enough to include both a literary discussion of Flannery O'Connor and a philosophical analysis of the Big Bang.

*Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales* by Jack Zipes; Methuen; New York; $9.95. *Beauty and The Beast* and *Sleeping Beauty* reinterpreted under the enchantments of New Left theorizing. Fairy tales were never better soporifics.

*A New Agenda for Education*; edited by Eileen M. Gardner; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC; $5.95. Since schools have given up on education and have opted for social reform and experimentation, the results have been illiteracy and chaos. A distinguished company of writers and scholars here attempt to pick up the pieces and suggest ways to fit them back together again.

*Will George Orwell Survive 1984?* by Leopold Labedz; The Eastern Press; London. In this provocative essay reprinted from *Survey*, a leading Orwell scholar finds some of the most deceptive examples of Newspeak in recent leftist writing about *1984* and its author.

*Goethe* by T. J. Reed; Oxford University Press; New York. Sixty years of literary accomplishment judiciously surveyed in 100 pages.

*The United Nations Development Program: Failing the World's Poor* by Richard E. Bissell; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC; $5.00. *The World Health Organization: Resisting Third World Ideological Pressures* by John M. Starrels; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC; $5.00. Political insiders credit The Heritage Foundation with getting the U.S. out of UNESCO. Two new Heritage studies, however, recommend different policies in dealing with two other UN agencies. John M. Starrels recommends continued support for the World Health Organization because it has adhered to its mandate. Richard E. Bissell finds the United Nations Development Program still worth salvaging but suffering from ideological drift and organizational flaws.



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# Mormons and Modernism *by Bryce Christensen*

*"So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight,*
*So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light."*
—John Dryden

Leonard Arrington: *Brigham Young: American Moses*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Richard L. Bushman: *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*; University of Illinois Press; Urbana, IL.

Jan Shipps: *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*; University of Illinois Press; Urbana, IL.

Ernest H. Taves: *Trouble Enough: Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon*; Prometheus Books; Buffalo, NY.

Leo Tolstoy called Mormonism "the American religion" and ascribed to it the potential of becoming a world power. But the "Mormon" Church—properly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is today still not a major world religion, and its status in America has been problematic from the beginning. Early on, persecution persuaded the Mormons to leave the United States for Mexican territory. But even before they reached their Rocky Mountain retreat, the Mexican War changed the boundaries and brought the Latter-day Saints back under the red, white, and blue. The subsequent conflict with Federal authorities over polygamy and the political power of Church leaders was intense. Federal officials actually seized all Church property in the late 1800's. But after Church leaders ended the practice of polygamy in 1890 and withdrew from politics, persecution finally ceased, and Mormons began to take their place in modern America.

Specifying just where that "place" now is, though, is not easy. Geographically, the popular perception of Mormonism as a "Utah Church" is no longer accurate: only about a fifth of the Church's five million members now live in Utah, and almost half live outside of the U.S. and Canada. Identifying the Church's position within the contemporary American religious spectrum is even more difficult. On social issues, Mormons seem to have found a spot within the "religious right": a Mormon senator and bishop, Orrin Hatch, has been a leader in the antiabortion fight; Gloria Steinem has called the President of the LDS Church the single most important man in the defeat of the ERA; and Jerry Falwell identifies Mormons as one of five groups whose views make them natural members of his Moral Majority. Given the Church's history of polygamy, there is considerable irony in Southern fundamentalists' asking Mormons to help in defending traditional morality. There is irony, too, when descendants of secessionists ask the great-grandchildren of would-be emigrants to join in the cause of patriotism.

> *"Has the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay."*
> —The Book of Mormon

Besides these ironies, there is considerable tension within these tactical alliances. For religious conservatives usually take doctrine—not just morality—seriously, and LDS doctrine diverges sharply from that of mainstream Christianity. Many Christians consider Mormons heretics, while some even call them non-Christian. Jan Shipps, a non-Mormon professor of religious studies at Indiana University, concludes her insightful analysis of the faith with the judgment that because Mormons accept the Bible and worship Jesus Christ as the only Savior of mankind, their Church must be regarded as "a form of *corporate* Christianity." Yet she observes that Mormonism does not fit in any of the "standard categories" used for classifying other Christian groups. Mormonism is decidedly a "new religious tradition," one that "differs from traditional Christianity in much the same way that traditional Christianity . . . came to differ from Judaism."

To clarify just what Shipps means, it is necessary to enter the little-known world of Mormon doctrine and history. Both begin with Joseph Smith, a raw farm boy born in Vermont in 1805 but raised in upstate New York. Beginning at the age of 14, the young Joseph was to claim spiritual experiences of an extraordinary sort. Confused about which church to join, he claimed to have learned in a vision of the Father and Son that all existing churches were apostate and that he would be the Lord's instrument for restoring Christ's church to the earth. Three years later he claimed to have been visited by an angel named Moroni, who told him of buried gold plates upon which was inscribed a history of God's dealings with ancient inhabitants of the New World. Published in 1830 as a miraculous translation of that record, *The Book of Mormon* told of a group of Israelites who were led to the Americas by the prophet Lehi shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. Once in the Western hemisphere, this group split into a barbarous, infidel nation, the Lamanites, and a civilized, religious people, the Nephites. Visited by the resurrected Jesus Christ after His ascension from Palestine, the Nephites eventually desert the faith, however, and are destroyed by the Lamanites, leaving behind only their sacred record.

But *The Book of Mormon* marked

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only the beginning of Smith's ministry. Claiming ordination by angelic visitation—first by John the Baptist and then by Peter, James, and John—Smith organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830 in Fayette, New York, with six members. As the prophetic leader of this Church, Smith ordained new apostles of Christ and wrote additional scripture in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*. Added to by his successors, these new revelations identify the family as an eternal unit, enjoin vicarious baptism for the dead, define a premortal existence for men as spirits, and (what is most offensive to some Christians) announce that as offspring of God men may hereafter become like their Father.

Because of the sweeping nature of his claims, it is difficult to halt between two opinions of Joseph Smith. It is no help that his status—prophet or fraud—depends upon the authenticity of several events in which very few shared directly: three others testified that they had seen Moroni and the plates; eight men swore they had seen the plates. In this regard, Shipps observes, Mormonism parallels early Christianity, which began with "the story of the resurrection of Jesus without supporting it with objective evidence obtained from persons outside the incipient Christian community." The consequence is that "despite the availability of an enormous body of primary source material, early Mormonism has proved to be almost impervious to objective study."

Just how unattainable objectivity is in viewing Mormonism may be seen by contrasting the two recent books on Joseph Smith by Richard Bushman and Ernest Taves. Bushman, a Mormon, has written the history of a man of God. Taves, a rationalist, has written an exposé of a charismatic liar. As a Latter-day Saint myself, I am naturally more sympathetic to Bushman's book, but I think most readers would agree that Bushman's volume benefits from the comparison. A professor of history at the University of Delaware and a recipient of the Bancroft and Phi Alpha Theta Prizes, Bushman works from a broad bibliography and effectively anticipates many of Taves's arguments. A psychiatrist and contributor to *Playboy* and *Galaxy*, Taves has obviously written his journalistic work quickly, drawing heavily upon a few avowedly anti-Mormon sources and simply ignoring most Mormon scholarship. Mormons will be amused that Taves takes the apostate Oliver Cowdery as a reliable witness against the Church, apparently unaware that Cowdery later repented and rejoined the faith. As a skeptical biography of Joseph Smith, Taves's work is clearly no improvement over Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* (1945).

The most serious deficiency of Taves's book, though, lies in its conclusion, which argues that the Church would be little affected if Church leaders were to redefine *The Book of Mormon* as "a work of imaginative fiction" and repudiate Joseph Smith's claims to supernatural revelation. "Surely the vitality of the church is sufficient to ensure its continued existence and growth under this different formulation." Perhaps the editors at Prometheus Books (a steady supplier of antireligious "humanist" works) believe this. Probably many liberal Protestant theologians do, too. But most readers will find Taves's conclusion harder to believe than an angel and gold plates.

Most people know very well what has happened to denominations that have redefined the Resurrection as an imaginative or political allegory. The pews are empty. Intelligent readers may not accept Bushman's faith, but it is hard to reject the conclusion he appends to his account of the boy prophet and Moroni: "The strength of the church, the vigor of the Mormon missionary movement, and the staying power of the Latter-day Saints from 1830 to the present rest on belief in the reality of those events."

In the face of persecution that continued even after the murder of Joseph Smith in 1844 by a hostile mob, those without a sincere faith in *The Book of Mormon* found other creeds. The beleaguered faithful followed the Church's senior apostle, Brigham Young, across the frozen Mississippi River in February of 1846 and then on to the mountains of Utah. During the next 40 years 150,000 Saints traveled the Mormon Trail, thousands with nothing but handcarts.

The man who directed this exodus was a 28-year-old cabinetmaker and a dissatisfied Methodist when his sister first gave him a copy of *The Book of Mormon* left by a traveling missionary. He began his investigation of Mormonism supposing that its precepts would leave undisturbed his conviction that "Jesus Christ had no true Church upon the earth." He later related: "I found it impossible to take hold of either end of [Mormonism]; I found it was from eternity, passed through time, and into eternity." Baptized and ordained an elder in 1832, Young never thereafter wavered in his defense of the Church and became one of Joseph Smith's most trusted advisers.

As he appears in Leonard Arrington's definitive biography (written from within the faith), Young is a "powerful personality" but not an important revelator. Since his work added little to the canon reopened by Joseph Smith but resulted instead in several hundred Latter-day Saint communities in the Great Basin, Young might perhaps be better viewed as an American Joshua than an American Moses. But as with Joshua, Young could perform his work of colonizing only because a previous prophet had given him and his people new scripture. While still living in dugouts, the Saints named their towns for *Book of Mormon* people and places and began building granite temples.

Even in the 20th century, few Mormons have accepted Taves's invitation to "join the rest of the world" in world view. As Shipps observes, Mormonism refuses to fit into the "post-Enlightenment setting" defined by science and the Protestant Reformation. Mormonism may indeed be one of America's least "modern" faiths. In a time of specialized professionalism, the LDS Church operates with a lay clergy and no professional theologians. Fathers baptize and confirm their own children and ordain their sons, while farmers, businessmen, and physicians serve as bishops. In an era of feminism and youth rebellion, Mormons insist that "the patriarchal order" is divinely ordained and ask their young men to sacrifice two years in missionary service. As progressive denominations respond to sin and doctrinal deviation with "understanding" and "tolerance," Mormons excommunicate. While yuppies perfect the art of private con-



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sumption, Mormons build large families—and search their genealogy.

But the most anachronistic feature of Mormonism may be its continuing openness to the miraculous. Bushman makes the point that since the 18th century most Christian denominations have rejected the possibility of supernatural events not recorded in the Bible. Mormons offend fundamentalists and agnostics alike by violating this Enlightenment-Christian synthesis with their talk of angels, healings, prophecy, and revelation in our time. Caring little for the contemporary "authenticity" of existential doubt, Mormons individually affirm that their faith has been miraculously confirmed by a witness from the Holy Ghost received in answer to prayer. Even professional Mormon scholars such as Bushman and Arrington would explain that such revelatory experiences are as essential to their faith as documentary research, empirical evidence, or hermeneutical logic.

The ways of explaining Mormonism's anomalies remain irreconcilable. Skeptics continue to see adherents as the dupes of both first-century *and* 19th-century impostures; many traditional Christians suspect heresy and worse; while Latter-day Saints testify that they follow prophets of God and the Holy Spirit. Short of the Judgment, public agreement seems possible only on the undeniable proposition that Mormons are set against the spirit of the age. cc

# Comparable Worth? *by Steven Hayward*

***"On the whole, the home remains the supreme cultural achievement of women."***

**—Georg Simmel**

**Elisabeth Griffith: *In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*; Oxford University Press; New York.**

**Kathleen Brady: *Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker*; Seaview/Putnam; New York.**

Near the turn of the century Charles Péguy, alarmed by the advance of secularism in the modern world, predicted that the true revolutionaries of the 20th century would be the fathers of Christian families. Today we might fairly turn Péguy's aphorism on its head and say that the true radicals at the moment are the *mothers* of Christian families. So insistent and pervasive has the feminist drumbeat become that it is very nearly the conventional wisdom that *any* social distinction between the sexes is the result of pernicious "sexism," which is as unjust, if not more so, than racism.

*"Stanton's hammering at all the ways men have subordinated women anticipated by a century the female consciousness raising adopted by women's liberationists."*

The New York Times Book Review

*Steven Hayward is editor of Public Research, Syndicated.*

Women still marry and start families, yet motherhood is no longer viewed as the most important thing a woman can do in her life. Motherhood, instead, is viewed as simply one "option" among many, or perhaps as a single facet to be "integrated" into the "life-style" of the thoroughly modern woman. We should not be surprised, then, that feminist agitprop attaches an implicit stigma to motherhood, a veiled yet deliberate assault on the self-esteem of those women who choose to be "mere" mothers.

Here and there the feminist rage against human nature has broken out into open denunciation of motherhood—as it must if it is to remain consistent with its own logic. More than a century ago, Elizabeth Cady Stanton forthrightly declared that marriage, a "man-made institution," was inherently degrading to women, and that "this marriage question lies at the very foundation of all progress." But Stanton was no matrimonial Luddite; she defended monogamous marriage on other occasions and advocated legal reforms which by today's standards seem reasonable and just. Still, Stanton understood the tactical utility of rhetorical extremism, for, by the Law of the Slippery Slope, the outrageous eventually seems reasonable.

The pentecostal moment for the American feminist movement occurred at Stanton's home in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Even though the moderate political reforms demanded by the Seneca Falls sisters —divorce law reform, women's suffrage, etc.—were many decades in coming, the dilemmas of feminism were apparent in the lives of Stanton and the early suffragists. Stanton, according to her biographer, found her children "a source of enormous satisfaction," yet wrote to the unmarried Susan B. Anthony on more than one occasion that she longed to be free of both her husband and the kids so as to devote more time to the cause.

Stanton did not live long enough to see women receive the vote, but later in life she achieved independence and celebrity status. She spent eight months a year for 10 years speaking publicly on the Lyceum circuit, stayed with prominent citizens at her various destinations, and earned for herself the title "the Grand Old Woman of America" by the newspapers. Toward the end of her life, Stanton professed some self-satisfaction at having become the first of the "new women," a type with which we have become all too familiar in recent years. (Indeed, Stanton might well be characterized as "the Bella Abzug of the 19th century.")

Yet a critical look at Stanton's life reveals the paradoxes, ironies, and contradictions of feminism. Like so many modern enthusiasms, feminism begins as the domain of the very affluent. The Cady household where Stanton was raised employed 12 servants, and later in life Stanton retained a household staff which gave her the freedom to pursue her public interests.



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(Her biographer does not record whether the domestic staff was composed of men or women.)

The sustained rise of American living standards over the last century has, it goes without saying, broadened opportunities for everyone, especially women, who are no longer bound to domestic duties by necessity. There is no disputing that the changes of society wrought by modern economies have affected relations between the sexes. I doubt whether Mrs. Jerry Falwell or Phyllis Schlafly would stand for the domestic regimen of their grandmothers.

But this presents us with one of the grand ironies of America. America is the arena in which true progress is vindicated; yet even as progress has expanded opportunities and secured a broader range of rights, the feminist rage against our liberal society has grown more strident and uncompromising. Only in America, it seems, do women recognize how bad off they are!

Stanton's case aptly illustrates the degeneration of feminism from its origins with Anthony and the early suffragists. Many of the early suffragists were scandalized by Stanton's more outrageous dicta, many of which could have come from today's stentorian feminists: "Society as organized today under the man power is one grand rape of womanhood." Yet the feminists of Seneca Falls, Stanton included, made an explicit appeal to natural rights as the basis of their concrete political demands, and even fashioned their "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments" after that classic embodiment of natural right, the Declaration of Independence.

This appeal to natural right is ironic, for contemporary feminism, like most other modern ideologies, begins with an explicit denial of human nature. Nature is a term of distinction, which, as well as providing the basis of man's inherent rights, also sets *limits* to what man may aspire to do. Feminism shares with modern scientism the fallacy of supposing that because *necessity* has been mitigated by material progress, nature, especially human nature, is therefore malleable to man's will.

While the Stanton of Seneca Falls appealed to natural right as the basis of political equality, the older Stanton understood that nature has to be reinterpreted—denied, in fact—for the more radical feminist claims to social equality to have any plausibility. Stanton aimed high, writing *The Women's Bible* in 1895, which professed an androgynous "Mother and Father God." On another occasion, she even came close to suggesting that women could be the physical equal of man through "the healthy development of their muscular system."

The tacit assumption behind the feminist blast at the "patriarchal" social order is that there is really nothing prescriptive about human nature, and that our social ordering is merely an accumulation of "roles" imposed by illegitimate tradition or force. Hence the heavy emphasis today on new "role models." Elisabeth Griffith explains in a "methodological note" that "role models were central to the development of Elizabeth Cady Stanton as a feminist." Three times in 30 pages Griffith laments that Stanton's greatest hindrance at the moment was that "she was without a role model."

This preoccupation with "role models" reveals the biases of feminist biography: their polemical intention is made clear by the hindsight interpretations which judge these 19th-century subjects by today's standards. In this crucial respect these biographies tell us more about the biographers than the subjects. Consider the closing paragraph of Kathleen Brady's portrait of Ida Tarbell:

> In life she had never found repose. As a woman in a male world, she felt herself so inferior, especially when glimpsed from the height of her dreams, that she dared not face many aspects of herself. Ida Tarbell was not the flinty stuff of which the cutting edge of any revolution is made. She was a reasonable woman who thought she tried to accommodate herself to circumstances, not to change them. Yet she was called to achievement in a day when women were called only to exist. Her triumph was that she succeeded. Her tragedy was never to know it.

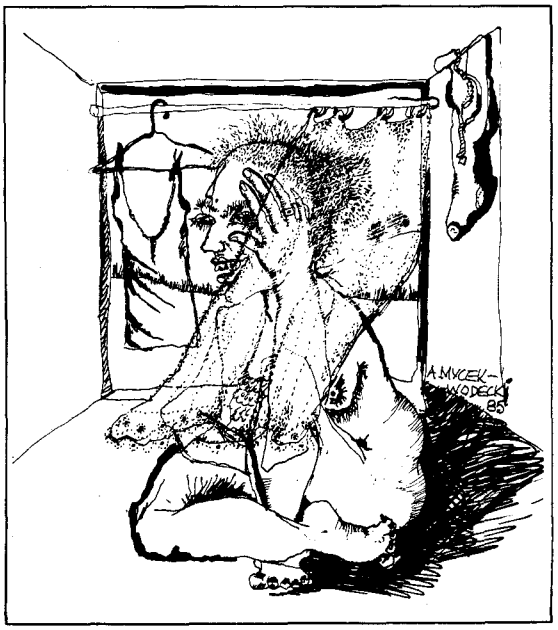
Now this might be true, but it is not established by Brady's narrative. The fact is, Tarbell didn't fit the feminist "role model" of a woman whose "consciousness" had been "raised"; she "was not the flinty stuff of which the cutting edge of any revolution is made"; therefore, there must be something lacking in her that kept her from facing "many aspects of herself."

*"In the end, lofty and largely isolated from the groups speaking in her name, [Stanton] nearly approximated the androgynous deity which was the only one she deigned to recognize."*

The Progressive

What disappoints feminists about Tarbell is what also disappoints them about women of distinction today like Margaret Thatcher, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Sandra Day O'Connor: they don't toe the feminist line. (The rabid Sonia Johnson calls Kirkpatrick and Thatcher "female impersonators." Get it: it's not physiology that matters, it's your "consciousness.")

Tarbell, although she was comfortable in the company of men, never married and had little romance in her life; she was extremely dubious about the suffragist movement and the feminist agitators of her day. Even though she had broken clear of "woman's traditional place," she nevertheless upheld the value and importance of domestic life for women. Tarbell had no





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enthusiasm for the vote, and doubted, according to her biographer, "that women would use their ballot any more wisely than men." Indeed, in 1928, Tarbell blamed Al Smith's loss on the women's vote (the first "Gender Gap"?). When the 19th Amendment finally passed in 1920, a suffragist told Tarbell: "The millennium has come. You'll see what a world we will make." Tarbell knew better, perhaps anticipating the Ferraro campaign: "Women will not find themselves in the political field in less than fifty years."

Aside from the hidden feminist ax grinding quietly in the background, this is a fine biography, providing rich details about the journalism of the time and other major figures including Lincoln Steffens, Samuel McClure (founder of *McClure's Magazine*), John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil, and many others. Brady explores the possibly vindictive motives behind Tarbell's drive to write her exposé of Standard.

But Tarbell was more than a female Woodstein; she wrote creditable biographies of Lincoln, Napoleon, and Madame de Roland, was asked repeatedly to serve the government (she usually declined), and displayed good sense about many of the issues of her time. She thought Henry Ford's World War I "peace ship" idea was ridiculously naive, and though she regarded herself as "progressive," she resisted ideology. Unlike Steffens, she did not see mendacity at work everywhere, and she never regarded socialism as the magic cure for man's ills. Arguably the only times she allowed righteous indignation to erupt into excessive zeal were in the cases of Rockefeller and the tariff question.

There is no doubt that Tarbell was insecure, especially about money, and was uncertain of herself at various turns in life. Still, she had many virtues; she was modest, fastidious, and charitable. Perhaps she had regrets later in life that she hadn't followed her own advice to other women to marry and pursue domestic life. Yet compared with Stanton, Tarbell's is indubitably the greater achievement. Still, Brady leaves the impression that the correct "role model," as far as one's "consciousness" goes, is Stanton. Like so many biographers, Brady tries to understand Tarbell better than Tarbell understood herself, and in doing so succeeds only in revealing the biases of our own time. cc

# Wrongful 'Rights' *by Daniel J. O'Neil*

*"Men ambitious of political authority have found out the secret of manufacturing generalities."*
—Sir Henry Sumner Maine

**Donald Lambro: *Washington—City of Scandals*; Little, Brown; Boston.**

**Richard E. Morgan: *Disabling America*; Basic Books; New York.**

The contemporary American political scene does not encourage optimism. Donald Lambro, author of *Fat City*, documents in minute detail the all-too-numerous Washington scandals. He describes the unearned rewards secured by persons and groups possessing the necessary clout and connection, as well as the fate of the occasional dissenter. Richard Morgan describes the even more ominous invention of "rights" supposedly based on Constitutional interpretation. These rights, which always strengthen the claim of the individual against the community, were conjured with little regard for history, the intent of Congress, the interests of the community, or the precepts of order. In essence, both books describe the malaise of the American political process—the corruption of government via special interest groups.

Why has the contemporary American political system proved to be so vulnerable? To some degree, the problem stems from the liberal Lockean origin of our polity, which defined society as a conglomeration of atomized individuals who live together in order to promote their personal interests. Old liberals had little concern for the common good but instead a faith that the competing interests would somehow achieve a balance. The system worked so long as the very secular liberal perception was underpinned by a strong Protestant ethos that stressed work, duty, and honesty. Historically, the system also benefited from its geographical distance from Europe, its abundance of natural resources, its cultural homogeneity, and good fortune. Compared with other societies, America was seldom challenged by real adversity.

A society so hazy in its conception of the common good and so optimistic about countervailing power as a deterrent to abuse is especially vulnerable to those special interest demands documented by Lambro. The decline of the Protestant ethos—especially among the elites—removes previous restraining influences. Without a clear sense of distributive justice, there are no norms by which we can judge the demands of an organized group. The result is, everyone demands the ultimate. One gets what one can; everyone is doing it. Anything is acceptable so long as it does not violate the letter of the law. Eventually, the unorganized and the unpolitical must pay the price.

The liberal faith in countervailing power as a remedy for extravagant special-interest demands has proved delusive. Often there is no countervailing force. An explosive current example would be illegal immigration. Liberals who can never say "no" to an ethnic minority join hands with those who want cheap labor in opposing control over our borders. The common good is ignored as we cooperate in flouting the law and in building a nation within the nation, irrespective of future costs. At a lower level, the farm lobby is seldom confronted by an antifarm lobby, the military-pension

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lobby is seldom confronted by an anti-military pension lobby. In these and other areas the national interest is left to shift for itself, and the public is expected to pick up the tab.

Even more dangerous than the Washington scandals are the inventions of the "rights industry." These activities tamper with the very fabric of the Constitution. The Constitution and the English language serve to hold together a potentially divided society. But why should the individual be bound by an 18th-century document designed by 18th-century aristocrats to promote their concerns? At what point was consent given? Few contemporary Americans even had forebears in 18th-century America.

The national myth works so long as there is popular veneration of the Constitution. But those who would again and again subvert the document by squeezing out of it "rights" that have no historical basis succeed in compromising the myth. There is the danger that at some point the average citizen will lose his reverence for the founding contract. The emperor will stand naked and unloved. As Burke warned, compromising the traditional systemic myths can leave a vacuum filled ultimately by the policeman. Recent examples of middle-class citizens appealing to nonpositive higher law to smuggle in aliens, to bomb abortion factories, and to inconvenience subway thugs may be a harbinger of the future.

To understand Morgan's "rights industry," we might repeat the old Leninist question: Who stands to gain by this? Is it the politicians, the ideologues, the bureaucrats, the judiciary, or the rights clientele? Politicians have a vested interest in depoliticizing important emotive questions. They inevitably avoid taking stands by shifting responsibility to the judiciary for a question labeled Constitutional. The assets of incumbency can mean a lifetime sinecure for a congressman if he provides the usual constituency services and remains noncontroversial. By removing emotive (e.g., busing, affirmative action, abortion) questions from the political realm and tolerating judicial legislation, he protects his flank. The judicial outcome is of only secondary concern to the careerist. Congressional efforts to thwart judicial

usurpation are cosmetic ceremonies for the benefit of the uninitiated.

The ideologues—especially visible during the late 1960's and early 1970's—like to compare the United States with some norm of perfection. As a consequence, they are perpetually disgruntled. Intoxicated with the need to "question authority" and to promote quick change, they have little loyalty to history, tradition, public opinion, or the requisites of order. They turn to the judiciary to legislate their latest fad. The post-World War II judiciary has been vital to the rights strategy. The nation waits breathlessly for the Supreme Court to make decisions that should have been made by the elected officials. The judiciary is far from objective in its legislative ventures. It overrepresents a certain milieu, certain law schools, certain pressure groups, and certain lines of argument.

Ambitious bureaucrats also play their parts in the rights drama. A bureaucrat on the make can invent a new "right" to attract attention and facilitate a promotion. Or he can apply the latest social science scheme to the political arena. New rights also encourage governmental expansion. The rights must be explained, clarified, and implemented. Violators must be apprehended and punished. A new empire has evolved.

The irony of the rights explosion is that the purported beneficiaries ultimately gain so little. A new right is proposed, and its supporters unambiguously promise some outcome. As the right comes to fruition, a structure develops around it involving jobs and routine. Seldom, if ever, are the policies examined to see if they fulfill the original objective. Busing and affirmative action were to be temporary remedies! Who predicted that the novel privacy rights would lead to 15 million abortions? Thomas Sowell and Charles Murray have persuasively documented how little America's Blacks have benefited from the numerous rights created in their behalf. The rights industry seems to develop a life and momentum of its own.

What might be done to counter the problems documented in these two books? Certainly more than a cosmetic response is required. Institutionally, the judiciary must be reintegrated as the lesser branch of government. Perhaps a scrutiny of the roles of the judiciaries in the mature Western democracies would demonstrate the aberration of American jurisprudence. Historically and comparatively, democracy has thrived without judicial activism.

More fundamentally, our need is a rediscovery of the concept of the common good/public interest as a norm for evaluating demands upon the system. Ideally, the norm should encompass a transgenerational component—life viewed as a "chain of being" or as "a contract that links the living, the dead, and the yet-unborn." Consequently, significant demands would be evaluated in terms of the general interest viewed with a concern for the claims of history and the claims of future generations. Accordingly, America needs a definition of corruption that extends beyond the illegal. The legal abuses documented by Lambro and the manufactured rights examined by Morgan are corruptions and should be labeled as such. cc



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# Rumors of War *by Paul Gottfried*

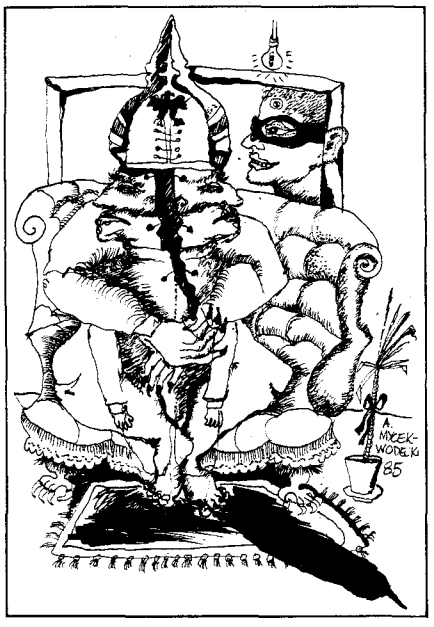
*"Shall I weep if a Poland fall? Shall I shriek if a Hungary fail?"*

—Tennyson

**Robert Kee: *1939: In the Shadow of War*; Little, Brown; Boston.**

**Gordon Brook-Shepherd: *Archduke of Sarajevo*; Little, Brown; Boston.**

Neither Robert Kee nor Gordon Brook-Shepherd has written a masterpiece. Both men cover well-trodden fields of research: one, the events of 1939 that Winston Churchill



aptly called "the Second Thirty-Years War"; and the other the life and politics of Franz Ferdinand, the Austrian archduke whose murder at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, helped trigger the First World War. Both authors are English journalists who are trying to reach an educated but largely nonacademic public. While Kee's prose is lean and straightforward, Brook-Shepherd's is intended for those who enjoy Victorian novels.

There is, however, a real difference between the two authors. While Kee holds persistently to received liberal assumptions, Brook-Shepherd has a more independent mind. Kee believes there was nothing unexpected about the outbreak of the Second World War; thus his stated interest in showing how the average Englishman or Frenchman was overwhelmed by events in 1939 is never more than a put-on. Kee depicts Europe, and even Asia, as encircled by a growing fascist menace. The fall of Madrid to General Franco in March 1939 is treated as a victory for Hitler's Spanish henchmen, as a sign—one which the democracies chose to ignore—of fascism's continuing growth. For the intellectual left the anticommunist right is always monolithic, while the communist bloc never is. Besides, Franco was not a Spanish Hitler, or even another Mussolini, but a traditionalist military leader who derailed the Spanish Falange and jailed its leaders. He repaid Nazi Germany for its military support by sending fascist toughs to die for Hitler on the Eastern front. During the Second World War Franco refused to allow the Germans the use of Spanish bases and was far more restrained about trade with the Axis than socialist Sweden, one of Hitler's major suppliers of iron.

Kee also exaggerates the solidarity of the Axis power in 1939. Except for an appetite for land on the cheap, it is hard to see what ties bound anti-European Japan to Hitler's greater Aryan empire. Fighting against Hitler in 1939 would not have entailed a corresponding war against the Japanese occupiers of Manchuria. The Western powers could (and should) have dealt with Nazi Germany decisively, before their vulnerability led the Japanese to seize decaying European empires in Asia. Even later, greater American flexibility in negotiating with the Japanese might have spared us a war on two fronts that began for us in 1941 with a postponable conflict against a marginal Asian enemy.

Brook-Shepherd provides a sadder, less cut-and-dried picture of the past. He writes sympathetically of the Hapsburg family (having numbered several of its members as personal friends), but makes no attempt to hide the structural defects of their multinational state. His subject, Franz Ferdinand, upon becoming heir apparent to the throne of his uncle Franz Josef, began to plan a reconstruction of the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire. Franz Ferdinand believed that the distribution of political power between Austro-Germans and Hungarians that had taken place (under a joint crown) in 1867 should be changed to accommodate his future Slavic subjects. He advocated more political autonomy for the Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Poles, and other Slavs living in the Empire. The Hungarian gentry and middle class, together with German nationalists in Austria, opposed his plans. Whatever the political and other obstacles to his projected tripartite empire may have been, Franz Ferdinand was farsighted in proposing it. Even if the plan had been only gradually implemented, perhaps starting first with the Czechs, politically the best organized and most educated Slavic minority, the effect would have been to dissipate Slavic opposition to Hapsburg rule. In retrospect, it may also be apparent that the Hungarians, who refused to share with other nationalities what they themselves had won, were inexcusably small-minded.

Yet, in dealing with the Hungarians and their Anglophile, largely Protestant leaders, Franz Ferdinand resembled the Radical Republicans after the Civil War, who mixed sympathy for Negro freedmen with a violent hatred for Southern whites. The archduke liked Slavs and hated Hungarians: in his case the first sentiment may have resulted from the second. The Hungarian Diet had objected to his morganatic marriage to his commoner wife Sophie. The Hungarians tried to use the awkward marriage to weaken further royal control over them, and protested the morganatic union even retroactively. They raised doubts whether someone whose children would not be eligible to succeed him would be a fitting Hungarian king.

The Hungarians' abrasiveness contributed to the dislike that Franz Ferdinand came to feel for them. The Hungarians who sensed this antipathy

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grew even more estranged from the archduke and his family. When the assassination occurred at Sarajevo, few, if any, Hungarians mourned. When the Austrian government discussed plans for taking action against Serbia, which had aided the terrorist responsible for the murder, the Protestant Prime Minister of Hungary, Count Tisza, resisted. Tisza wished to keep his countrymen out of a war that would be fought on behalf of a German Catholic dynasty, and in revenge for the slaying of Hungary's avowed enemy. Hungarians were heard to complain that winning a war against Serbia would be for them even worse than losing one. A victorious Austro-Hungarian Empire would annex more Serbs, and thus there would be increased pressure to give the Slavs in the Empire political equality with the Hungarians and Austro-Germans.

Brook-Shepherd is fully aware of the complexity of historical causation and avoids the stereotyping characteristic of more conventional studies of the period. He challenges the view of the Hungarians as a purely reactionary obstacle to a political reform of the Empire. The Hungarians opposed the Slavs and even the Hapsburgs in the name of what the late 19th century considered progressive forces. They were liberal nationalists who admired the English Parliament and were humane in their treatment of religious minorities. Like their national hero, Kossuth, the Hungarians considered the Slavs to be culturally backward and under the control of superstitious, sometimes pro-Hapsburg priests. Unfortunately, the Hungarians helped undermine the only political structure which brought decent government to Central Europe—and which allowed them as a nation of about 12 million to function as a great power.

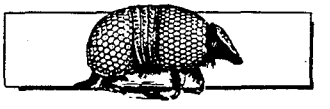
Brook-Shepherd senses other ironies, too. The Austro-Hungarian government, which sought protection against Russian expansion into the Balkans, turned for support to Imperial Germany. The English government of Lord Grey, in reacting to the increased military power of Germany, turned to France for help and to France's ally since 1894, Tsarist Russia. Though Austria-Hungary and England were both taking defensive stances and had once been staunch allies, the two countries were on opposite sides in 1914, as the result of their attempts to protect themselves against what each one perceived to be the major threat to European stability: Russia, in the case of Austria, and Germany, in the case of England. Brook-Shepherd shows how the desire for peace, or protection from a foreign adversary, pushed the two sides toward war. A final irony is that the leader who might have done most to avoid the crisis of 1914 was the one whose death set off the war. By reestablishing the English Hapsburg special relationship of earlier times, Franz Ferdinand attempted to undo the rigid alliances into which the great powers had backed themselves. Toward this end he used his personal friendship with King George V, while trying to mediate Anglo-German differences. He planned to reform his own empire so that discontented nationalities would not contribute to either internal discord or international tensions. His fateful journey through the streets of Sarajevo, that took place despite ominous warnings, resulted in destruction to himself and his work. cc

## REVISIONS

### *Transplanted Texan*

Our literary establishment seems designed to ensure that a writer's first novel is his best. Norman Mailer, James Jones, William Styron, and J. D. Salinger are only a few of the better-known novelists whose first work defined the acme of their creative careers. (In the case of John Barth, the second novel, *The End of the Road*, was aptly named.) The reasons for this phenomenon are not far to seek. Good fiction grows out of an intimate knowledge of real life, with all the unpredictable idiosyncracies and peculiar traditions of some particular neighborhood, community, or family. Employment with the American fiction industry destroys all that. The budding writer—delighted at the success of his first book—moves to New York or Boston, where he begins giving interviews, appearing on talk shows, and lecturing at creative-writing seminars. In short, the author decays into a celebrity, out of touch with everything that gave him a reason for writing. William Styron provides the best example of this dismal process at work on a Southerner, but Alan Hines, a Texan by birth, may well follow in his tracks.

Hines's *Square Dance* (Harper & Row; New York; $14.95) is a compelling first novel, opening a window upon the rural Southwest of a generation ago. The central characters—a cantankerous chicken farmer and his illegitimate granddaughter—may not be entirely satisfactory as representatives of a time and place characterized by family cohesiveness. Still, Hines depicts the world of small-town Texas—of folk sayings and Bible preaching, of square dancing and bass fishing, of neighborly cooperation and petty gossip—with sympathy and skill.



Inevitably, the chicken farmer's granddaughter leaves for Fort Worth, "a big city, with lots of things going on." But after a hard initiation into the New South of random sex, violence, and dissipation, she finally returns to the sureties of farm life and tornadoes. Unfortunately, just as we are about to hail the arrival of a new regional talent, we learn from the dust jacket that Hines has himself relocated in New York, another "big city, with lots of things going on." Unlike his heroine, he apparently plans to stay in the metropolis, where he now works as a teacher and editor, when he is not appearing on the writers' conference circuit.

Next he will be writing novels about the inferiority complex a Texan gets in the company of New York intellectuals. Perhaps a national book award and then, the final insult, a decoration from the French government. cc



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## REVISIONS

### *Psyche*

Words like *liberal* and *conservative* have been losing whatever meaning they once had. An old Tory would not have seen anything very conservative in free trade, and Senator Bob Taft would certainly have had reservations about America's role as international policeman. But *liberal* still has discernible significance in ethics, where the great liberal traditions of Locke, Adam Smith, and the Utilitarians are carried on by able defenders like John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Bruce Ackerman. Although the philosophers disagree on a great many things, they share certain operating assumptions which make possible a rich cross-pollination of liberal ethics. Among the truths they hold to be self-evident is the assumption that ethical decisions are made by individuals in confrontation with other individuals; the most important quality of these decisions is the fact of their universal application without distinction of persons. If something is right, it is right for everyone under all circumstances. Considerations of kinship or national identity are irrelevant.

Since liberal ethics avoid reference to transcendent or supernatural beings, they are forced to fall back on certain abstract standards as a basis for ethical judgments. For Adam Smith it was "the impartial spectator" to whom we could appeal as a judge (an idea revived by Peter Singer). Rawls goes back to the old state of nature myth in the form of "the original position" of equality. By relentlessly emphasizing equality, Rawls is led to a sort of totalitarian ethics of duty which would require each of us to share our wealth and resources until we were roughly equal with the worst-off. On the other side, Nozick so emphasizes the rights side of the equation that he ends up celebrating anarchy. If there is a serious ethical debate going on in the U.S., it is largely between liberals that stress one or the other side of the rights/duties coin.

Enter James Fishkin, at once the most trenchant critic of liberalism and its ablest defender. In a series of brilliant short books—*Tyranny and Legitimacy*, *The Limits of Obligation*, and *Justice, Equal Opportunity, and the Family*—he has exposed the perils of moral absolutism by demonstrating that all versions—Rawls's leveling and Nozick's libertarianism—can be used to justify obviously unethical conduct. What is just as serious, in Fishkin's view, is the extent to which these zealous absolutists impose an impossible burden on ordinary people. Not everyone may be prepared to bear the burden of moral heroism. The unintended result may be the withdrawal into a subjectivism that regards all ethical principles as mere matters of taste. In his latest book, *Beyond Subjective Morality: Ethical Reasoning and Political Philosophy* (Yale University Press; New Haven), Fishkin profiles a series of "ordinary moral reasoners" and explores their dilemma. He outlines six characteristics which most people expect of an ethical system. Listed in order of severity, they require ethical judgments: to apply to oneself and to others, to be applied consistently to similar cases, to be "objectively valid" (i.e., most people would accept the reasoning behind them), to be inviolable, and to be absolute or "rationally unquestionable." Ordinary reasoners often conclude that since none of their judgments is likely to fulfill these expectations, all moral positions are merely arbitrary.

Anyone familiar with Fishkin's work might predict that he would advocate a middle ground. In fact, he suggests that we might reasonably content ourselves with a minimal objectivism which rejects absolutism and inviolability, while retaining the expectation that judgments will be universal and objectively valid.

As a practical hypothesis for everyday life, this minimal objectivism may offer a way out to many people trapped in their own subjectivity, but it does not address the underlying problem of individualist ethics. For one thing, there is nothing in Fishkin's position that rules out subjectivism: at best, his objectivity is a possible alternative. Unlike the absolutisms of Plato or St. Thomas, Fishkin's middle ground does not even claim for itself an invincibility against relativism. It is a little like the Anglican via media between the absolutism of the Roman Church and the radical individualism of the extreme Protestants. Like Episcopalians, liberals must always be tempted by the most available absolutist dogma in the air. These days, temptation is not likely to come from Rome—or anything even vaguely theistic, for that matter. Fishkin argues that "it would be out of bounds for a liberal state to base moral arguments . . . on the ultimate convictions of any particular group," in particular on "our cherished beliefs about God." On the other hand, "the Marxist strategy of basing claims to a kind of legitimacy on historical inevitability remains a possibility." Marx, it seems, is not mocked.

But the greatest weakness in Fishkin's position is his refusal to reconsider the fundamental principle of abstract individualism. He continues to graph human relations on the grid of I/thou intersections, as if there were no other way. Aristotle, whom Fishkin never seems to quote, wondered if a man could be considered happy if his good fortune did not extend to his kin. To his credit, Fishkin is beginning to realize that a man might owe special obligations to certain people, e.g., wife and children, but he continues to express these obligations in the bloodless language of abstract individualism. Still, the strains to which he has subjected his own liberalism may be a sign that he is outgrowing the tattered chrysalis. (TJF) ∞



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# CALHOUN AND COMMUNITY *by Clyde Wilson*

In any discussion of the Old Federalism—at least among that minority whose substantive knowledge of American principles and ideals precedes the beginning of the Kennedy dynasty—the name of John C. Calhoun and his idea of the concurrent majority is likely to come up.

Calhoun's reputation as a political thinker has had its ups and downs. Widely praised in his own time and after, by no means solely by defenders of slavery and state rights, he was dismissed as a narrow reactionary fanatic during the intellectual rationalization of the victory in the Civil War. That victory, among other things, implied the triumph of the programmatically implemented will of the majority, in which ideas of Constitutional limitations and minority rights had only token place. In the 1950's, however, in biographies and commentaries from surprisingly diverse quarters, Calhoun was rediscovered and elevated. The burden of this rediscovery is conveyed by the title of one of many scholarly articles of the time, Peter Drucker's "Calhoun's Pluralism: A Key to American Politics." Calhoun was celebrated as the philosopher and prophet of minority rights. His idea of the concurrent majority, implying the necessity to secure the assent of significant minorities for major political decisions, was thought of as having described the way American pluralism actually worked.

During the Civil Rights Revolution, Calhoun was again relegated to a minor and negative role. Recently, as a part of the broad movement of conservatism, he has once more been receiving favorable attention. He has been so treated in Italian and Japanese scholarly journals. In American books and journals he has been called upon to provide solutions for the problems of the United Nations, Northern Ireland, and South Africa, and his ideas have been invoked to support Supreme Court decisions favoring minority representation on local governing bodies and even as a potential resource for Black Americans.

There is some merit and usefulness in these formulations. However, they slight and distort the real burden of Calhoun's thinking on American government. For these formulations only incompletely grasp what Calhoun had to say, and, in my opinion, they sometimes embody a Pollyannish and inaccurate notion of the way our government works. The formulations, which Calhoun's realism would have scorned, in fact represent the tendency of current thinkers to transcribe into mechanical and ideological terms ideas that are basically moral. Calhoun is better viewed as the last of the great republican thinkers who reached their peak with the Founding Fathers rather than as a prophet of modern pluralism, as a philosopher of democratic consent rather than as an architect of minority rights.

Calhoun's thought, embodied in 40 years of congressional speeches and public papers and in his two treatises, A *Disquisition on Government* and A *Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States*, constitutes a remarkable body of commentary on the American system—its political economy, finance, international affairs, and many other matters, as well as Constitutional principles. Calhoun was the last active American statesman who was philosophical rather than empirical. To fully elucidate this would take several books. Here I wish to do no more than point to the opening pages of A *Disquisition on Government*. Properly understood, they contain a wealth of insight pertinent to the recovery of Old Federalism.

A *Disquisition on Government*, a slim 100 pages, is the most considered of Calhoun's works, to which he devoted his leisure in the last five years of his life. He said that he hoped by it "to lay a solid foundation for political science." Simple and clear in style, the work is complex enough in implications to have provoked many different interpretations. It would be an accurate, though not a complete, description to say that it is a study of the nature of the consent of the governed in a government of people.

A reading of the *Disquisition* afresh should convince anyone that Calhoun's concurrent majority was not, in the first instance, structural. It was not, except incidentally, a series of devices to protect minority rights, though such devices, given a Constitutional system that already relied on checks and balances, had some relevance. What Calhoun was interested in was the nature of *consent*. All agreed that American government rested upon the consent of the governed, that this was the starting point for a democratic society. But what was this consent? How was it to be expressed, measured, and preserved? This, to Calhoun, related less to checks and balances and the mechanical features of government than to the old republican question of the virtue of the people. It is here that Calhoun has his real relevance. He was attempting to purify and clarify the republican idea of the consent of the governed, to move it to higher ground where it would be safe from the pressures of the 19th century that were silently turning it upside down. In this he failed, but nonetheless is still instructive.

In the *Disquisition*, Calhoun not only argues for his own views, but also recapitulates the implicit assumptions of the Founders of the American Constitution-making period:

> . . . I assume, as an incontestable fact, that man is so constituted as to be a social being. His

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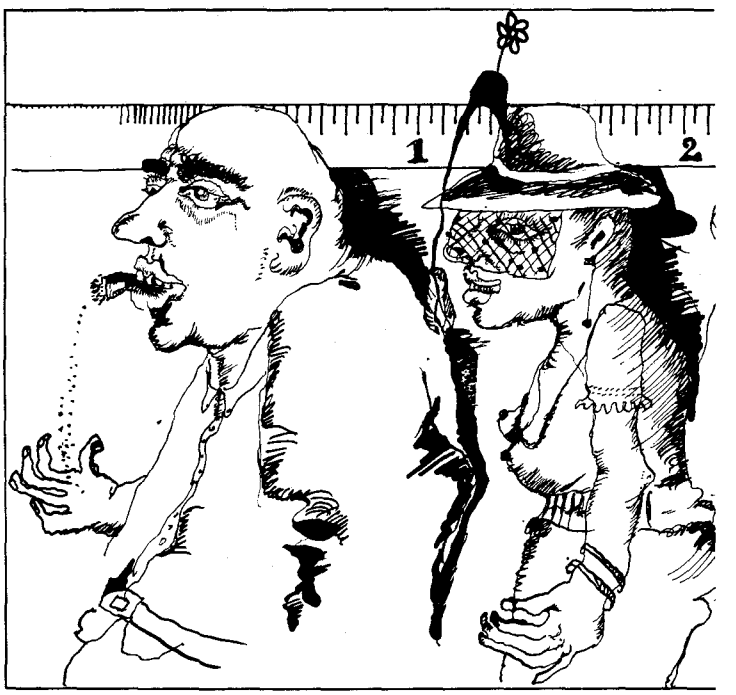
> inclinations and wants, physical and moral, irresistibly impel him to associate with his kind; and he has, accordingly, never been found, in any age or country, in any state other than the social. In no other, indeed, could he exist; and in no other—were it possible for him to exist—could he attain to a full development of his moral and intellectual faculties, or raise himself, in the scale of being, much above the level of brute creation.
>
> I next assume, also, as a fact not less incontestable, that, while man is so constituted as to make the social state necessary to his existence and the full development of his faculties, this state itself cannot exist without government. This assumption rests on universal experience. In no age or country has any society or community ever been found, whether enlightened or savage, without government of some description.
>
> But government, although intended to protect and preserve society, has itself a strong tendency to disorder and abuse its powers, as all experience and almost every page of history testify. . . . The powers which it is necessary for government to possess, in order to repress violence and preserve order, cannot execute themselves. They must be administered by men in whom, like others, the individual are stronger than the social feelings. And hence, the powers vested in them to prevent injustice and oppression on the part of others, will, if left unguarded, be by them converted into instruments to oppress the rest of the community. That, by which this is prevented, by whatever name called, is what is meant by CONSTITUTION, in its most comprehensive sense, when applied to GOVERNMENT. . . . Constitution stands to government, as government stands to society; and, as the end for which society is ordained would be defeated without government, so that for which government is ordained would, in a great measure, be defeated without Constitution.

We like to think of our democracy as having sprung naturally from the political wisdom of the philosophical revolutionists and Constitution-makers of our founding period. We, like they, believe that government rests properly on the consent of the governed, the will of the people. However, when we contemplate modern ideas of the relationship between the democratic state and the people with the degree of historical perspective provided by Calhoun's *Disquisition*, we confront at once an innovative assumption that has crept into our thinking and turned the understanding of the Fathers on its head.

As expounded in the 20th century, the theory of democracy is that the rule of the people is the sum of individual wills and inclinations. The democratic man casts his vote, along with all the other citizens, and the numerical majority of these votes determines the will of the people. By this scheme the chief locus of social value is in the democratic process itself—the right of participation and the possibility of the minority becoming a majority at the next election, all of which is together often summed up and celebrated as "the open society." This description seems to me to fairly represent the theory of American politics as it has been described in the last half-century or so by the predominant academic political scientists and popular spokesmen.

Under this dispensation, a great deal that was assumed as basic in the republican philosophy of the Founding Fathers gets lost. What is to be decided by the will of the people, directly or by representatives, for instance, is usually seen as programmatic and empirical. The public good has no independent existence but is the sum of trade-offs between the union member, the manufacturer, the public school teacher, the welfare client, and all the other participants in the process. The will of the people thus becomes a balance




of interests, a sharing of the pie. Not only is the idea of the public good, taken for granted by the Founders and by Calhoun, missing here, but also missing is the idea of the independent citizen whose strenuous virtue is the foundation of the public good.

By this scheme, the citizen is defined and exists by virtue of his participation in the democratic collectivity. In fact, only in its emphasis on "openness" does this idea of the democratic society differ from modern totalitarian theory. In both, the state and the individual confront each other starkly, and the individual, in the final analysis, is defined by the state. But for the Founding Fathers, the bedrock of republicanism was not the egalitarian political participation of the abstract individual so dear to modern democratic theory. Rather, republicanism (government of the people) was defined by the freedom and self-determination of communities of men, preexisting historically in all the complexity and differentiation of their social bonds. The history of American democracy is, until this century, the history of community. Self-government was the expression, not of the individual, but of communities. Missing from the modern formulation is the assumption with which Calhoun



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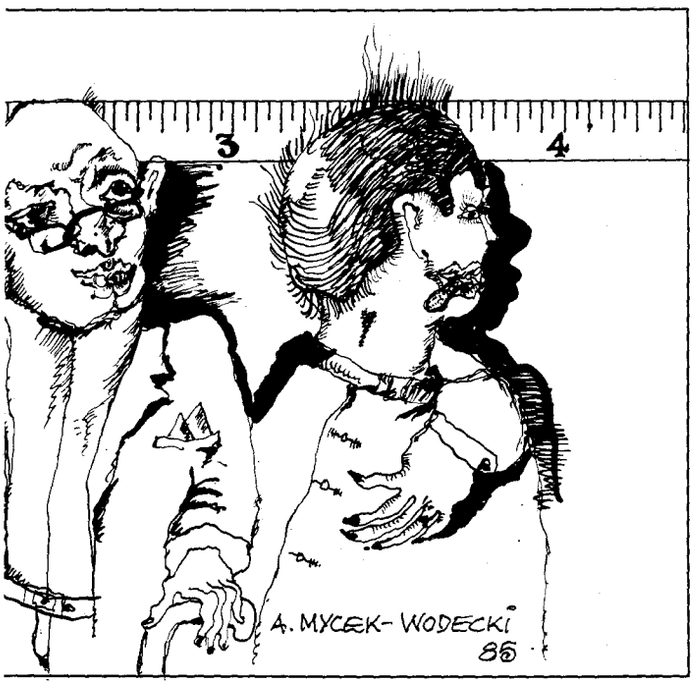
began—preexistent society itself.

For the Founders, liberty was not the right of the rootless individual to do as he pleased or to participate in a process of head-counting leading to majority rule. It was, rather, the right of natural communities to be free from the depredations of the state. The definition of tyranny in the republican philosophy (inherited from the English "country party," amplified by American experience and thought, and underlying the American Revolutionary response) was the overreaching by the state of its legitimate bounds to tamper with or exploit the communities of men. The point of Constitution was not that they guaranteed a process of democratic decision-making. It was, rather, that society (the people) created and delimited an authority for its




protection. In theory and practice, we have moved from a condition in which majority rule was a device for protecting society from the state, to one in which society is the raw material to be exploited and reconstructed by the state, acting in the name of a "majority."

It was this which Calhoun foresaw when he spoke with contempt of the "mere numerical majority." Here, I submit, is an insight of great importance. For Calhoun was not simply advocating a veto power for a numerical minority within a political system governed by a numerical majority. His point was much more basic. It was that the "numerical majority" or the "mere majority" did not represent the consent of the governed, that the political will of the people properly involved not head-counting but something higher and more intangible, a process of *consent* by society. But here is the key point. The elements of this consent were the organic parts of society, preexistent to government. These elements, being the product of society, and not of the state, ought to be inviolate. It was these elements that deserved the protection of the veto power implicit in the concurrent majority. Throughout Calhoun's discussion is the recognition of the superiority of the natural social elements, those that have come into existence spontaneously by the force of history and the necessities of man's nature, over those artificially created or enhanced by government action. The latter are precisely seen as one of the dangerous by-products of an unqualified and abstract majority.

In any proper theory of democratic government, society must precede the state. It is with this observation that Calhoun begins. Society was man as he was found—in family, in custom, in ethnic, territorial, religious, and occupational communities. For Calhoun, and here he was simply restating the assumptions of the Founders, the locus of value was not in the democratic process, it was in society. The democratic process was merely the best means to protect and preserve society. That society is hierarchical and antiegalitarian in both structure and values does not contradict the fact that communities should largely govern themselves and give the law to the state. And there is no protection implied for minorities which seek to come into being or power by state action. No ground is laid here for a pluralism marked by claims to veto power on the part of minorities who wish to disrupt natural society or assert an inviolate right to the earnings of others by state action (e.g., the advocates of "gay rights" and of "welfare rights").

It was Calhoun's assumption, rather, that such artificial minorities threatened the consensual basis of the government of the people. He decried particularly in his own time manufacturers (by virtue of log-rolling a numerical majority) who wished to force industry into prosperity through protective tariffs that preyed upon the earnings of other parts of the community and political spoilsmen who sought the profits and power of office rather than the public good. In the latter connection he spoke again and again on the corruption of democratic consent represented by empty party slogans (like the Whigs' "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too" of 1840) and by the rise of oily equivocators like Martin Van Buren, who sought to mute and obscure issues, to rest their appeal on the broadest and least controversial ground possible, and thus to achieve power as an end in itself rather than as a means to reach fundamental decisions for the public good.

One might argue, as Daniel Boorstin has, that this muting of issues was a pragmatic and constructive avoidance of dangerous antagonisms. This is a kind of evasive pragmatism that would have been anathema to both Jefferson and Hamilton. The effect of this blandness, Calhoun maintained, was to undermine that free deliberation *within and among* communities that was a necessity for achieving the genuine consent of the people. The end result was to suppress disagreements that might be honorably adjusted, force them into other channels, and postpone and increase the explosion. Thus Calhoun predicted that the evasions of party men would lead to civil war, and those historians who have characterized the Civil War as a failure of democracy must concur.

Put another way, the consent of the governed was not to be viewed primarily as a process of counting heads, even when conditioned by technical safeguards for the minority. The consent of the governed was primarily a high moral matter—a process of political deliberation and social assent. The minority veto was not a device to block decision,



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but an effort to provoke further deliberation and a higher consensus. It trusted in the consent of the governed, that is, in the people, to find the right answers, provided the action of a mere majority, which might be a temporary manifestation of selfish combinations, could be suspended long enough to bring into play the higher consensus of communities.

Reflect upon the degree to which democracy depends upon the spirit of parliamentary institutions—the agreement that opponents are to be heard, to be dealt with civilly, and not to be overridden ruthlessly; that all are bound by decisions made after a proper hearing; and that all are pledged to remain a community even in disagreement. This entire proceeding relates less to the theory of majority rule, head-counting, than it does to the moral heritage of feudal chivalry—tolerance and respect for the opponent as bound within a common system of honor. There is nothing about it that is modern, utilitarian, or efficient or compatible with the "open society" theory. If the consensus is to be maintained, there are things the mere numerical majority must not do, even when it has the power. The majority must look for an answer that is inclusive and morally satisfactory rather than expedient, the morally satisfactory answer being, in the long run, also the most practical if genuine consent of the governed is to be maintained.

Here, then, is the lesson. The community must be the master of the state rather than its raw material. This is indeed a logical necessity in any viable theory of self-government, as well as a Constitutional and moral truth. It is also, I believe, an historical truth. Calhoun's postulate that society precedes government is not, like the state of nature, merely a convenient theoretical starting point. It actually describes the origins of American government and provides the element that distinguishes America from Old World societies. In a speech of 1841, Calhoun referred to a historical contingency which "through the mysterious dispensation of Providence" had had a decisive effect on "the prosperity and greatness of our country." This contingency was that British America was not settled by an armed government, but "by hardy and enterprising emigrants, inspired, in some instances, with a holy zeal to preserve their religious faith in its purity; in others, by the love of adventure and gain; and in all, with a devotion to liberty. It is to settlements formed by individuals so influenced, and thrown, from the beginning, on their own resources almost exclusively, that we owe our enterprise, energy, love of liberty, and capacity for self-government."

When Calhoun premised that society preceded government, he was merely recalling American experience. His own family was part of a kith of Scotch-Irishmen who had come into the up-country of South Carolina before the Revolution when it was empty of all but hostile Indians, tied together not by the state but by blood, religion, necessity, and the desire to make a new life. They carried some cultural baggage, and there was a distant Crown that was in theory sovereign. But the settlers were in fact virtually self-governing and self-reliant communities in economic, political, ecclesiastical, and military affairs. There was a real sense in which they participated in the creation of their own governments and constitutions by communal acts of consent.

The county in which I now live was occupied at the beginning of the American Revolution by interconnected families of prosperous German farmers. They had been settled for half a century and had no particular quarrel with the King in Great Britain. When confronted with the Revolution they did not appeal to the rights of individual man or to the "open society." The heads of households gathered under the trees, talked for two days, and decided that the interest of their community would best be served by allegiance to the American cause, which they thereafter supported loyally, often at the cost of property and life. If this seems an exaggerated or eccentric statement of historical precedence of society over government in this continent, reflect upon the self-governing congregations of Puritans who settled Massachusetts Bay, on the self-governing wagon trains and mining camps of the West, and on the later communities of immigrants of many sorts. Nowhere does the individual constitute only an abstract integer in a numerical majority.

There is a sense, of course, in which the subjugation of society to government, the reversal of the master-servant relationship between the community and the state apparatus, was an ineluctable product of "modernization." But there is also a sense in which it was a conscious decision, and therefore reversible. For, at an identifiable point in our history, we *decided* that the state ought to become master. This happened at the end of the 19th century, when a Progressive elite declared that the conditions of modernity required it to take a guardian role through the Federal government and discard previous notions of what constituted American principles. I can illustrate this turning point by a typical assertion of that time that I happen to have conveniently at hand. It is from the founding statement of the American Economic Association in 1885: "We regard the state as an agency whose positive assistance is one of the indispensable conditions of human progress." That is, the community is no longer able to govern itself, but must be guided by a class of experts wielding the power of the state. But the complexity of modern society did not necessarily call for a shift to the state. It called for new instruments of consensus formation. Empowering the state to solve all our problems does not make the state the instrument of the people. It makes the state—and this was Calhoun's point about the "numerical majority"—the instrument of the strongest interests and reduces democracy to an endless game of pie-sharing and the citizen to an abstraction.

If we are to be true to the American inheritance, society must precede government; the community must take precedence over the state. This simple declaration, I realize, does not grapple fully with the complexities of modern life, with the thrust of the predominant strain of the national character, and with the burdens, including the international role, that history has piled upon us. However, I am talking about philosophical starting points, not final solutions.

If it is indeed true that man is capable of self-government, then it is true that his mistakes are to some degree reversible. Much could be accomplished toward the preservation and reordering of self-government if we could reorder our thinking to give society precedence over government and make our communities the master of the state rather than its raw material. ∞



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# THE CONSERVATIVE COUNTERREVOLUTION *by Otto Scott*

The term counterrevolution was always used by Lenin and his associates in a pejorative sense. In the Marxist view, since "progress" is irreversible, any gains made by the left are to be considered permanent, while any gains made by the right are to be considered temporary setbacks. The contemporary treatment of *revolution* and *counterrevolution* in academic writing is a good indication of the degree to which Lenin has triumphed.

In what is now called "comparative revolutions," a leftist dominance reflects both the usurpation of literature by the academy and the usurpation of history by Marxist professors and their sympathizers. Crane Brinton, for instance, is an authority on what he calls "great" revolutions. These, he says, "start as internal crises in the old regime, proceeding to a government of moderate revolutionaries, then to a radical reign of terror, which leads to a Thermidor in which order is restored but some gains of the revolution are maintained."

This familiar analysis is based on the conviction that revolutions are the results of minority discontent. But suppose that is not the case. Suppose that it is the *majority* that is discontented—or, more accurately, suppose enough in the majority are discontented to tip the balance of the core population against the government. If even 30 percent of a group is discontented, they may very well allow a minority to overthrow the leadership of the whole. Therefore, it might be more useful to look not at the minorities, which always harbor discontent, but at the majority.

In a recent article, Ellen C. Myers emphasizes "the impact of the Old Believers on Russian society." According to Myers, Old Believers such as her family once numbered between 20 and 25 million persons—or about one-third of the Russians in the polyglot Czarist empire. Although the Czarist government relied upon the Russians and especially the Russian traditionalists to support the regime, they managed to alienate the core of the traditionalists by arbitrarily introducing innovations into the Russian Orthodox Church. The Old Believers refused to accept the changes. As a result, they were persecuted enough to drive them underground. They stopped registering their births, marriages, or deaths with the authorities. They created a number of enterprises behind various disguises, which made them officially invisible while allowing them to become very prosperous, much like the Huguenots in France.

Old Believers sympathized with the radical revolutionaries because they shared their antipathy toward the Czar. They provided money, false papers, safe houses, and other conveniences to the revolution. Without them the revolution could not have occurred, because they provided what Mao Tse-tung later called "the sea" in which swam the revolutionary fish. Myers's analysis sheds new light on the Russian Revolution. What Crane Brinton calls the "internal crisis of the old regime" may be more important than minority discontent. The discontent of a significant portion of the majority constitutes the fulcrum on which revolutions turn.

That yardstick fits the Iranian revolution. It was not President Carter's indecision which led the Shah to lose his throne, so much as the Shah's error in listening to a *series* of American Administrations which tied him, in the view of his core population, too closely to the West in general and to the United States and Israel in particular. The more the Shah Westernized, the more he lost the allegiance of Iranian traditionalists. In that light, we should pay some especial attention to those American journalists who chose to attack the strongest ally of Israel in the Middle East—and *our* strongest ally in the Middle East, militarily and financially speaking—for not being sufficiently "democratic." It's tempting to assume that such journalists are enemies of this nation and of Israel. But that temptation should be set aside. Ignorance is distinguished by its ability to injure any subject it discusses, and the ignorance of our press is beyond exaggeration. What is more to the point is that the Shah lost the allegiance of his people by his refusal to respect their beliefs. Instead, he concentrated on building up the Iranian economy. Kapuscinski recently described the Shah's regime as unconsciously inciting rebellion: "Its style of life and its way of ruling finally becomes a provocation. This occurs when a feeling of impunity takes root among

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the elite: we are allowed anything, we can do anything." We are reminded of our Federal courts.

Iran is only one example among many. Indonesia dropped out of the news after the Marxists under Sukarno were defeated. But Indonesia remains an interesting study. Sukarno, backed by the Kremlin, applauded by the press, received in the White House and in Whitehall, was thought to be in total control. He was not simply irreligious, but antireligious—that is, he denied to believers the right to their beliefs. Like the Shah, he thought religious groups were unimportant because the intellectuals said so. But in Indonesia the Marxist coup, which had Sukarno's blessing, misfired. Religious millions armed with knives and guns slaughtered an estimated 350,000 Communists and liberals. With the backing of the army, they ended the Marxist day in Indonesia.

Significantly, there was little public analysis of that event. Conservatives—neither then nor later—did not proclaim this anti-Marxist triumph on every street corner. In fact, the conservative jubilation was quite short-lived. It resulted in no important books so far as I know, very few essays or articles, and no seminars. The Marxists, however, knew something significant had occurred. Turning toward Central and South America, they realized that a revolution could not achieve success in those regions unless it included religious elements. Consequently, their Hispanic campaign moved beyond the intellectuals and into traditional Roman Catholic circles. Liberation theology was their vehicle. In Nicaragua, Marxists managed to deceive the Archbishop of Managua, the Bishop of Zelaya, and to enlist the Cardenal brothers, both of whom were priests.

The same arguments moved smoothly into main-line religious circles in the United States. The National Council of Churches, Maryknoll, and many bishops both Catholic and non-Catholic now promote these strange attitudes. What has happened to their congregations, which outnumber the millions who vote in national elections, has received far less attention than it deserves.

First, Vatican II introduced changes in Catholic circles from the top that were resisted by many within the American Catholic community. Ellen Myers sees a parallel between this group and the Old Believers. The Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian, and other main-line denominations have introduced similar changes from the top, without regard for the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of the congregations.

On a national scale, the rise of the religious right provides proof that the top-mandated changes and the antitraditional attitudes of the American governing class have served to arouse a considerable portion of the American majority. The appearance of such groups, however, has been greeted in some quarters with indignation, even among some conservatives.

That indignation illustrates the considerable distance between conservatism as a movement and the country's traditional majority. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this generalization. *Commentary* has carried articles by Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz indicating an intelligent sympathy for American traditionalists. *National Review* recently carried an essay by Joe Sobran which called attention to the disdain of our governing class toward traditional citizens, shown not only by the official attitude toward Bernhard Goetz, the subway shooter, but also in the persistent, though tacit, assumption that discrimination and prejudice in the U.S. is limited to members of the traditional white community. Sobran remarked that a stroll on any New York street shows this to be untrue. That article provoked mailbags full of praise from people who seldom hear a kind word about themselves.

What I describe, however, are not signs that a conservative movement is advancing, but signs that the *revolution* is advancing. The French Revolution, the prototype of all left-wing revolutions, prepared its attack in well-defined stages. The first was an assault against the traditional beliefs, culture, and leaders of the French majority. That assault has been underway here since 1900, when the Christian contributions to science, the arts, and Western civilization were stripped from our history books excepting in instances where they could be described as invidious. The press, literature, the stage, music, art, and cinema followed suit in an irregular but persistent manner.

The second stage of the French Revolution came when the campaign of vilification and denigration centered on the unifying symbols of the nation. In France, that meant the Crown and the persons of the King and Queen. In our case, it means the Presidency and the occupant of the Oval Office. In both instances, the effort was, and is, to strip the office and symbols, the personages and the post, of all extraordinary significance. In France Louis XVI was called a cuckold and Marie Antoinette a whore. Here the Presidency is a target for abuse, and the President is treated with disdain by leading commentators. Within one of the country's largest religious communities, a similar process puts the Pope in confrontation with nuns who stand with their hands on their hips and publicly denounce him.

In the French Revolution, the final preparatory stage was called reform. It was, in fact, for the reform of the taxes that the Estates General was convened for the first time in 150 years. The cry for tax reform has also arisen here.

In France the revolutionaries enlisted the courts and the judges in their efforts to reduce the power of the King. The judges hoped to increase their own authority. They were cheered by the revolution at every step taken in defiance of the Crown. Again, the pattern is clear. Our courts have ruled against the Executive, have defied the intent of Congress, to enlarge their own power. But listening to the crowd has its risks. A ruling that displeases the revolution results in angry threats. In lands where the revolution was actually launched, traditional courts and judges found their dignity so reduced, their status so belittled, their authority so diminished that they were replaced by "People's Courts." We are not at that stage, but the scaffolding is visible.

Meanwhile, the conservative movement is so conditioned that it regards economics and the electoral politics as all the world contains. Marxists started out with economic arguments against capitalists, and many conservatives still believe those arguments have to be answered. They cannot understand that the expansion of Marxism, despite its inability to feed the people it controls, means that Marxism is not an economic theory. It is a theory of governance.

James Anthony Froude best defined the realities of politics when he said:



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> Always and everywhere, even among the bravest peoples, the majority are spiritual cowards. . . . Government by suffrage, however, is possible only when the convictions of men have ceased to be vital to them. As long as there is a minority which would rather die than continue in a lie, there is a further court from which there is no appeal. When ten men are so earnest on one side that they will sooner be killed than give way, and twenty are earnest enough on the other to cast their votes for it, but will not risk their skins, the ten will give the law to the twenty.

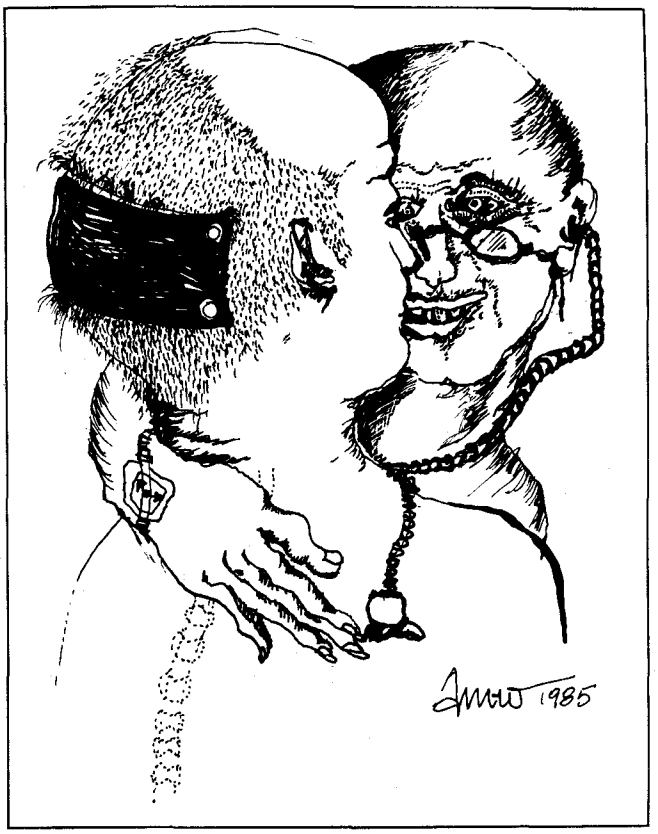
Conservatives have failed to grasp that central lesson of history. They fail to grasp what Marxists well know: that nations are not moved by economics, but by beliefs, by faith, by visions. The fact that the commissars create poverty is beside the point. The point is that they propagate a new faith, and that belief in omnipotent government has enabled the rise of a new class of overlords, in only two generations, over half the world.

Marxists have penetrated seminaries and pulpits throughout the West, to teach a new faith. While that process was underway, conservatives concentrated on economic matters, on cutting social programs, and succeeded in earning reputations for heartlessness and greed. Conservatives have concentrated on grooming attractive candidates for elective office—and the results are the gutless wonders of the Republican Party. Meanwhile, the revolution rolls on. While the conservatives cannot agree on what they want to conserve, the left has achieved the power to block the President's legislative agenda and to focus public outrage on South Africa—an ally from whom we obtain essential strategic minerals—for violating political rights. Meanwhile, the left muffles discussion of political oppression in the Soviet Union, China, and the rest of Black Africa.

The rise of the Moral Majority does not make the left-wing evangelicals, the sanctuary puppets, the peace marchers, the anti-weapons, anti-energy protesters vanish. On the contrary, the ranks of the left swell. What Rushdoony has called the politics of guilt and pity are in the saddle. The politics of race and ethnicity dominate, and the power of our major religions to bring together people of all races and ethnicity is ignored—even denied. Teachers in our public (and private) schools promote a revolutionary paradigm. That it has failed to improve the situation of the people anywhere cannot be discussed.

Where is the conservative paradigm? What is it that conservatives want to conserve? Their money? Their security? Their standing in the community? Their hold on public office?

Granted, the revolution today has what it lacked in earlier centuries: an international organization, a center of inspiration, funding, and support; it is armed with the most modern weapons and keyed into terrorism in all its aspects. But the Reformation successfully fought against a great international power with far fewer tools. The Reformation had a faith. Its thinkers, writers, preachers, soldiers, fighters, families dreamed of a better world. What do we want? To be safe? To live with half the arguments of the left? To talk about money, budgets, deficits, and taxes, a la Necker,




the last finance minister of Louis XV? The revolution has its spokesmen and apologists throughout our churches, universities, political parties, theater, stage, screen, and society—and we are not even indignant that no one on the other side is given a hearing. I am reminded of what Macaulay said about Oliver Goldsmith. "He didn't seem to resent insult," he observed. "But a man who has no sense of justice about himself is not likely to have one for others." The same can be said about nations.

Bookstores bulge with Marxist and liberal writings, while conservative writers struggle with low budgets, few outlets, scanty reviews. I am told that conservatives generally do not read much; do not buy many books—and prefer those that are short, simple, and obvious. How, then, can we win an intellectual war? We comfort ourselves with the ideas of Edmund Burke but forget how much John Wesley and George Whitefield helped turn the English-speaking world against revolution. How can we win without analyzing revolutionary thought and without devising the means not only to retard the spread of such thought, but to stop it?

To do this we must be more realistic, more honest, and much braver. Our leaders will have to elevate their sights and look to the traditionalists in our midst. For if a third of the Old Believers could create the opening through which the Bolsheviks flowed, a third of our Old Believers can create the dam by which our Bolsheviks can be bottled. cc



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## COMMENDABLES

# Fast-Living Frump

*by Daniel Harris*

**Barbara Pym: *A Very Private Eye: An Autobiography in Diaries and Letters*; Edited by Hazel Holt and Hilary Pym; E. P. Dutton; New York; $19.95.**

"Be more wicked, if necessary," Barbara Pym's agent once suggested as she revised her early novels and prepared to make her first wild dash through the gauntlet of London publishers. "Can you imagine an old spinster," she responded (she was fast upon the venerable age of 36), "frowning anxiously over her MS. trying to be more wicked?" Mischievous, in her most spiteful moments perhaps she could be. Sarcastic? Maybe. But wicked, in the Mary McCarthy sense of the word? Never. The self-styled frump of modern letters and the nicest of British novelists, Pym was a committed traditionalist who dug in the heels of her sensible pumps to create a world of kindly curates and church bazaars several hedgerows off the thoroughfare of the beaten literary path. As one of the best modern-day comediennes of manners, hers was an art of the run in the stocking and the rouge too red, of the dramas and the traumas of a world smaller and more slatternly than life.

In her own life, however, Pym was not nearly as "excellent" an "excellent woman" (to use the epithet she herself applied to the superannuated old maids who putter about her novels scrabbling tea leaves and potato peels) as her fiction might lead us to believe. *A Very Private Eye*, a new pastiche of her letters and journals stitched together by her sister Hilary and literary executor Hazel Holt, gives us an unexpected picture of the more rakish side of Moll Pym. Beginning with a bang in 1932 with the journals she kept at St. Hilda's at Oxford, and ending with a whimper, a postcard to Philip Larkin just a month short of her untimely death in 1980, the book is an immensely readable (if occasionally voyeuristic) peek through the keyhole into the private life of one of the "most under-rated writers of the century," as the *TLS* heralded her.

"As I write this I have a Boncilla beauty mask on my face—tightening my skin—nice if uncomfortable feeling," notes the sybaritic Pym of those early Oxford years. At 18 she was already considered more precocious than your average pigtailed, pennant-waving schoolgirl, and certainly not, as she was later to typecast herself, a whalebone-corseted spinster in embryo. If not the vamp or the *femme fatale*, she was, for her age, a rather extroverted epicurean who, when torn between "a steam beauty bath" and *Beowulf*, almost invariably chose the former. For Oxford in the 1930's, she lived her life in the fast-lane, as the large number of veiled references (widely meshed veil, at that) to her active love life suggest.

Sometime late in 1932 she developed an obsession, which became one of the profoundest influences on her personality, with a dashing young student whom she met somewhere in the vicinity of the pencil sharpener in the reading room of the Bodleian. Henry Harvey, dubbed Lorenzo, was to appear in nearly every journal entry from then on for the next eight years, monopolizing her attention to the exclusion of practically every other interest and exerting a rather demoralizing effect on her self-confidence. For all of the attention he receives, Harvey remains, perhaps not surprisingly, only the blank screen on which she projects her sexual insecurities and therefore a somewhat shadowy figure in the book. From what one gathers, Lorenzo was something of a Lothario, highly critical of Pym's appearance, intimidatingly cavalier, and much less interested in her, alas, than she in him.

In 1934 Harvey left Oxford and took a position at the University of Helsingfors, marrying Elsie Godenhjelm three years later. Pym was apparently bitterly disappointed and consequently struck up with them, in a spirit of retaliation, an arch and sarcastic correspondence, perhaps the most psychologically telling of the documents collected in the book. Adopting the facetious mannerism of referring to herself in the third person, she jabs tongue through cheek when she describes for the Harveys' benefit the personal squalor of the life she leads, now a lovelorn and colorless old dowager of 24. The skittish tone that these letters strike screeches like chalk dragged across a blackboard. In many of them, often addressed to "Darling Sister Elsie!" she damns herself with the shriveled-up sobriquet "Miss Pym," whom she describes as "a spinster lady thought to have been disappointed in love." "This so prudent sensible spinster," this "stuffed-shirt," as she refers to herself again and again, is "an old brown horse walking with slow majestic dignity" or in one letter "quite a dog," who fritters away her time hooking rugs or tittering at the witticisms of her parson at teatime.

These I, I-who-have-nothing letters to the Harveys represent Pym at her worst, and she was never again to sink nearly as low into self-pity. What's interesting about them is the insight they provide into the creation of Pym's persona of society's mousey supernumerary mouldering with her pussycats and unrequited passions somewhere in the dark wings of the great stage of life. As an elaborate charade of self-deprecation executed in a broad *commedia dell'arte*, her correspondence with the Harveys marks the beginning of her persistent habit of fictionalizing her experiences to her own intensely unflattering disadvantage. Her relationship with Lorenzo really sowed the seeds of frustration and resentment that eventually flowered in the desiccated caricatures of dowdy "Miss Pym" who, feather dusters in hand, sidle about the pages of nearly all of her books. In other words, after reading this excellent collection of letters, her fiction can be seen as a gaudy and occasionally indulgent form of self-burlesque. cc

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# Troubled New Women

*by David A. Vicinanzo*

**Megan Marshall: *The Cost of Loving: Women and the New Fear of Intimacy*; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York; $14.95.**

Megan Marshall's book attests to the resiliency of nature and common sense in human affairs. *The Cost of Loving* is a chapter in the rise and fall of the feminist ideology.

Feminism, like many ideologies, had (Marshall uses the past tense) the characteristics of a religion. What Marshall calls "the code" defined good and evil as confidently as any dogmatic theology: "Thou shalt pursue thy career alone, and not place false gods before it"; "If thy heart causes thee to sin, pluck it out, for it is better to go to work heartless than to perish in the self-sacrifice of intimate human relationships."

The theologians of feminism came up with new virtues: "the curative powers of independence," careerism, unflappable personal control, disdain for men. They burned books and revised the past: "History," Rosemary Ruether declared, "is the holocaust of women." Nature was to get into step with the times: Shulomith Firestone yearned for the day when babies would be hatched; another prayed for "freeze-dried children," to be thawed out when she was "ready for them." About half of these "New Women" at some point would have an abortion.

According to Marshall, the Friedans and Millets and Greers sought to "wipe out in one generation what centuries of women had thought and felt." Femininity "became a dirty word" and was derided as "little better than a congenital defect." Above all, love was anathematized as the slippery slope to all that the feminists loathed.

How did young women respond to the new myth of independence and control? They conformed. Catechized by such breviaries as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and *The Female Eunuch*, and shamed into submission by the preaching of *Cosmopolitan*, *Savvy*, and *Ms.*, young women were putty in the hands of matriarchs bent on recasting the female in their own image. Defection was quashed. Single working women spoke "condescendingly to those who had withdrawn from the workaday world into marriage and motherhood," while the backslider insisted apologetically that she too would soon begin getting a paycheck or a degree in the new church of women.

But the 40 stories of contemporary single women that Marshall has compiled in *The Cost of Loving* suggest that dissent from the ideology soon began to surface. In part, the controversy, as in all insecure religions, was teleological: no one was sure where lay the treasure of the feminist heart. The theologians sent mixed signals: women were "strong and hard and aggressive"; on second thought, they were "compassionate, caring, giving, more thoughtful than men." Some took this to be a canonization of half the human race. Others recognized it as a gnawing "fundamental ambivalence about what it means to be a woman."

The great doubt, however, concerned not philosophy, but the emotions: "Conflict had settled deep into our souls, making us unable to love even when we wanted to." By 1984, "the ideals of feminism, professionalism and self-fulfillment failed us," and "the fear of intimacy was the new epidemic." The New Woman had lost control. Some of the women in Marshall's case studies described a "feeling of sudden and overwhelming emptiness"; in fact, "many felt, looking back, they never had much at all." As an anchorwoman declared, "I'm tired of thinking about me, me, me!" The passing years left many New Women regretting that they had not married, would not have children, and had wasted their young adult years pursuing feminist goals. "What kind of acid did I take to choose a life like this?" asked one.

Marshall's analysis is generally persuasive, though she probably overestimates the rapidity with which ideological feminism is going the route of the Shakers and Prohibition. Like most students of feminism, she tends to examine women in isolation from the rest of society: women do not get a fair shake as plain old human beings. The conclusion that at the heart of the New Woman lies a neurotic fear of "being like Mom" may be accurate, but much of what Marshall says applies equally to young men. How many of either sex have thought hard enough to ask: "Power, control, career—for what?" The crucial point Marshall does not develop is that ideological feminism is yielding bitter fruit because it was premised on the same self-centeredness that has always failed as a prescription for happiness.

Nonetheless, in paring away the rhetorical crust of the ideology, she does allow us to see what really lies at the core: a rather mundane ego problem that has little to do with women *qua* women, but much to do with imperfect human nature. The epidemic may be the failure of intimacy, but the virus is the disordered values and enfeebled sense of self-worth which afflict men and women alike. cc

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# The Big Surprise

*by Alan J. Levine*

**Charles Murray: *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*; Basic Books; New York.**

Charles Murray's book is a study of some of the biggest, and perhaps the least excusable, social problems facing American society. *Losing Ground* is based on a mass of data, and its message is clear and unmistakable: the benevolent social policies adopted in the 1960's have not merely failed, have not even simply made a bad situation worse —they have had the effect of *reversing favorable trends*. American society's real, if undeclared, "war on poverty," which was being won in the post-World War II era and as late as the mid-1960's, was lost—and by the very people who made it a "declared" war.

In 1950 about 30 percent of the American people, by current official definitions, were below the poverty line. This was reduced to about 13 percent by 1968. In 1980 that percentage remained the same, and by every possible index, that 13 percent lived lives that were worse, perhaps far worse, than the lives that were lived by most poor people in 1950 or 1968. They were more insecure, more drug-ridden, and more demoralized than ever.

These results, Murray shows, were not due just to the bad administration of basically good programs, but to a basic "strategic error" in the formulation of virtually all policies. This "error," however, was the expression of a deep-seated change in values and ideas among intellectuals, policymakers, and the opinion-molding strata of our society. In short, social policies in numerous areas—welfare, crime control, and education—changed the "rules of the game" for the poor, especially for those trying to escape their poverty. New rules were imposed that made it "profitable for the poor to behave in the short-term in ways that were destructive in the long-term." The realm of welfare



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was vastly expanded—and profoundly changed—as the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor was obliterated. Indeed, the very idea of individual responsibility, as far as the poor were concerned, was invalidated. As Murray demonstrated, it actually became more profitable to go on welfare than to work, in many circumstances. Crime, especially juvenile crime, became less risky and more profitable.

Being an underclass illiterate did not, of course, become more profitable than being a responsible member of the middle class. But the most tangible, immediate incentives which cause young poor people to learn, work, and abide by the law were eliminated. We are accustomed to hearing social policy and welfare discussed in terms that stress the transfer of economic assets from the well-off to the poor. In fact, much of the economic transfer is from well-off people to *other* well-off people (i.e., those who run social programs). But far more important, Murray suggests, are the transfers which take away noneconomic assets such as personal safety from the "deserving poor" and leave them at the mercy of the undeserving poor.

Though Murray at first seems to accept the claim that the change in attitude in the 1960's was inspired by genuine moral fervor and that it was morally superior to the "complacency in the face of want" of the 1950's, he ultimately rejects this notion. Not only did the policies fail—"what we did was wrong on moral grounds, however admirable our intentions may have been."

As Murray himself notes, the results that he found were a surprise and a shock to social scientists and policymakers. Yet, they could have been predicted on the basis of what he calls the "popular wisdom." To many ordinary persons, it was apparent that people need both incentives and disincentives, that people are neither naturally moral, nor morally equal, that a distinction must and can be made between the deserving and the undeserving. No doubt these notions have sometimes been misapplied or been used as disguise for callousness. But their truth has now been verified by 20 years of costly experience and experiment. cc

*Alan Levine is a frequent contributor to* Chronicles of Culture.

## IN FOCUS

# Life by Teaspoonsful

*by Stephen L. Tanner*

**Peter Handke: *The Weight of the World*; Translated by Ralph Manheim; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.**

This combination of writer's notebook and personal diary by the German novelist, playwright, poet, film writer and director Peter Handke is 243 pages of random perceptions, most of them just a few lines long. They were written between November 1975 and March 1977 while he was living in Paris with his daughter. He aims to capture with all their nuances the fleeting thoughts and impressions of daily life and human relationships. He admits to being weaker in knowledge than other writers but prides himself on his "poetic penetration of the world." He has "a passion for perception" which impels him to note evanescent feelings and impressions that ordinarily go unrecorded. As one of the entries reveals, his notion of the ideal human being is "someone who can repeat for the benefit of others a feeling which, if only for a moment, he has had quietly and privately."

There is a certain genius in his perceptions. He avoids repetition, and although the observations are usually of commonplace things, he generally manages to express them with more than commonplace skill. The reader derives a certain pleasure from the articulation of familiar but unremarked impressions: "Looking around in the dark movie house: so many glittering eyeglasses!" "How often when talking about celebrities people pretend, before naming them, to cast about for their names."

But reading so many pages of brief, discrete perceptions is somehow oppressive, especially when the mood of so many of them is angry or melancholy. The author is shy, self-conscious, and uncomfortable around others and flees to solitude: "When I think I recognize someone on the street: a moment of terror." But in solitude he feels forlorn, bored, and superfluous: "More and more, when I'm alone in a room, I lose the comforting feeling of synchronicity with many other lives and events; more and more, I feel excerpted, totally on my own." "Which is worse: anxiety or people." His principal satisfaction lies in his thoughts, and yet the only joys some days hold are moments devoid of thought. Many of the entries are preoccupied with fear, death, guilt, anxiety, panic, and aimlessness.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing about the book is not the observations themselves but the self-conscious intensity that produces them. Writing perceptions of life seems to take the place of living it: "I am sometimes active, but active life does not come natural to me; I can manage it only now and then." He sometimes cuts short an experience in order to record it in his notebook, and many entries suggest that such writing is an evasion of the responsibilities engagement with life inevitably entails. He seems to recognize this at one point when, after striking his daughter, to whom he impersonally refers throughout the book as "A" or "the child," he turns to his notebook to record the appearance of footprints in dewy grass: "After my unwarranted treatment of the child, such perception strikes me as hypocritical, an attempt to mollify myself by taking an attitude of perception."

To be so obsessively oriented toward recording impressions can be oppressive: "All things that do not interest me but that I am nevertheless forced to notice are trying to kill me." Reading this book reminds one of the unsettling and sometimes frightening and incapacitating experience of becoming acutely self-conscious of one's own breathing or heartbeat. cc

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# Cold Pricklies & Warm Fuzzies

*by Brian Murray*

**Joyce Carol Oates: *Last Days*; E. P. Dutton; New York.**

**Joseph Campos-De Metro: *The Slugger Heart & Other Stories*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.**

At 47, Joyce Carol Oates has to her credit more than 40 books, including 16 rather fat novels and nearly as many collections of not-so-short stories. Ms. Oates is also, however, one of this country's most widely criticized authors. She is, say her detractors, simply too prolific; she never blots a line when she ought to blot a thousand. Indeed, say some, Oates too often puts into print little more than automatic writing



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that is not only bloated, but gaudy, repetitious, and melodramatic.

These complaints are not without merit. But as Somerset Maugham liked to insist, an author has a right to be judged by his best work; and Ms. Oates is—at her best—a fine writer. For example, such neatly shaped stories as "A Descriptive Catalogue" and "Rewards of Fame," collected in *The Hungry Ghosts* (1974), capture perfectly that atmosphere of pretentiousness and paranoia that infects much of the academic world. At her best, Oates is unusually inventive and scrupulous: she creates plots and characters that live long in the mind. Arnold Friend, the sleazy teenage imposter who appears in the brilliant 1967 story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is one such character, as is the obese, manipulative Dr. Pedersen, who looms so large in *Wonderland* (1971).

Ms. Oates's fictional world is often ugly and violent, but of course so is much of postwar America that she attempts to capture—and comprehend. Oates does not press for a return to religious orthodoxy, it is true, but she backs no fashionable political panaceas either. She does not set out to raise questions that the editors of *The Nation* can easily answer. Oates wonders about the nature of evil and its resilience in the world. She is sensitive to the many ways in which the religious impulse continues to reveal itself in a largely secular age. Though Oates's own vision sometimes seems irredeemably bleak, many of her more sympathetically drawn characters do exhibit a kind of dignity: in the face of adversity, they struggle on.

The 11 stories collected in Oates's *Last Days* range from the very good to the rather tedious. Among the better stories is "The Man Whom Women Adored," which contains a marvelous portrait of a shallow, self-absorbed Lothario who carries into adulthood the sensibility of an unusually pampered child. In "The Wall," which is equally good, a young East Berliner meditates on that massive, terrifying and yet "mesmerizing" barrier that has all of his life imprisoned him in a city where men and women quietly seethe and dream daily of daring flights to freedom.

"Détente," "My Warszawa," and "Old Budapest" also look unsentimentally at life in Soviet-dominated countries. But these focus on central figures who are simply not very interesting, on touring academic types who in shabby hotels and beneath overcast skies brood a bit too predictably about the strangeness and the poignancy of it all. Oates traveled on the cocktail and colloquia circuit throughout Western and Eastern Europe in 1980; these three rather forced stories are, in effect, the postcards her most devoted fans expected—and which only they can enjoy.

Like Oates, Joseph Campos-De Metro grew up in a working class environment in a grimy Northeastern city, and like her he seeks to portray blue-collar life in his fiction. The characters in *The Slugger Heart & Other Stories* work as retail clerks, factory hands, and assistant managers in grocery stores; they fix big Sunday dinners, play bocce ball, and watch hours and hours of TV. They are then thoroughly average people, and Campos-De Metro, though he knows how to push a plot along, does not succeed in making them particularly intriguing.

In fact, because he is obviously something of a sentimentalist trying a bit too hard to prove his sympathy for the working folks, Campos-De Metro ends up creating characters who would not be entirely out of place in a network sit-com or in a Sylvester Stallone movie. They are, like Uncle Tonoose, a bit too lovable, cute. Campos-De Metro would thus do well to lock up his own television and read his Oates. Joyce may serve us too much gore and gloom on occasion, but she goes easy on the schmaltz. cc

*Brian Murray is professor of English at Youngstown State University.*

# Turning Left at Valhalla

***by Scott Edwin Ewing***

***Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*; Edited by David C. Large and William Weber; Cornell University Press; Ithaca.**

"We recently had a very serious conversation on the subject of Richard Wagner," Debussy once remarked to Pierre Louÿs. "I merely stated that Wagner was the greatest man who ever existed, and went no further. I didn't say that he was God himself, though indeed I may have thought something of the sort." Yet on the down side there is Tolstoy, who wrote of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, "It is a model work of counterfeit art so gross as to be even ridiculous." When it comes to Wagner, there is little middle ground.

Nonetheless, in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* six historians do their best to assess the extent of Wagner's influence during the latter half of the 19th century. The authors argue that Wagner "took the romantic idea of genius—of the artist as a cultural hero—further than any other artist in the 19th century, and the advancement of his work therefore became a crusade for many people who believed in that idea." Although most would consider this a satisfactory definition of Wagnerism, the authors see considerably more. Indeed, whether in culture or politics, they descry Wagner's influence nearly everywhere they look: in France, Italy, Russia, Britain, and the United States. By the book's end, one is left wondering why Swaziland and its Wagnerians were given such short shrift.

My point is not to make light of what is generally a well-researched book, but rather to emphasize that Wagnerism, if it is to mean anything at all, cannot be all things to all people. The authors themselves seem well aware of this when they observe that both Wagner's "adherents and opponents seemed bent on employing performances of his music dramas as occasions for political demonstrations and testimonials" that often "had little to do with what Wagner may have been trying to say through the medium of musical dramaturgy." Indeed, such liberties have been taken with Wagner in our own century: one need only be reminded of the Nazis' appropriation of him as a spiritual forefather or the more recent efforts of Chéreau and others to cast the *Ring* in a Marxist light to realize that, as with Nietzsche, most people have seen in Wagner what they please. Yet this point, made convincingly enough in the introduction, seems to fade a bit with each page.

In his interesting but tendentious essay "Wagner's Bayreuth Disciples," David C. Large finds it "hard to believe" that Wagner "would have mistaken the Third Reich for his ideal of the 'purely human' society." Very well. But would this alone have enabled Wagner to resist the Nazis' enshrinement of him had he lived long enough to witness it? Certainly Wagner's notorious megalomania and often convenient morality do him no favors in this regard. Wagner's biographer, Ernest Newman, said that the composer "knew no law in life except the full realization of himself at the moment."

But Large's primary concern, which his fellow contributors incidentally seem to share, is to put some ideological distance between Wagner and the taint of the *völkisch* right. The tradition-



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al association of Wagner with the right, says Large, was fostered not by Wagner and his writings, but by his disciples, "the industrious dwarfs of Bayreuth." Indeed, a passage from the conclusion (presumably written by Large and Weber) brings to the surface this troubling undercurrent:

> Wagnerism was not by nature 'proto-fascist.' If Wagner's name has been increasingly associated with Nazism and the Third Reich, our survey shows some quite different tendencies. Among the national movements we have seen, a tendency toward the Left was if anything more common than one toward the Right.

This notion—namely that Wagner was a man of socialist sensibilities—is hardly new. As far back as 1898, the imperfect Wagnerian Bernard Shaw interpreted the *Ring* as a socialist allegory in his *The Perfect Wagnerite*. But to suggest that many of Wagner's writings are not in the tradition of the *völkisch* right is simply to ignore the facts. Still, *völkisch* thinkers like Lagarde, Gobineau, and Treitschke—or even Wagner's own son-in-law Houston Stewart Chamberlain—are not Goebbels or Streicher. So while there is some merit to Large's assertion that "the exploitation of Wagner's legacy during the Third Reich amounted to an intellectual abuse," it is wrong to suggest that Wagner had leftist leanings.

The authors fail to apprehend that in the last analysis Wagner was, and remains, essentially a *German* phenomenon. "Yes, Wagner is German," wrote Thomas Mann in 1933, "he is national, in the most exemplary, perhaps too exemplary way." No amount of leftist revisionism should ever obscure this. cc

*Scott E. Ewing is a free-lance writer in Chicago.*

# Short Day's Journey Into Night

*by E. Christian Kopff*

**Martin Gottfried: *Jed Harris: The Curse of Genius*; Little, Brown; Boston.**

The man who called himself Jed Harris was the leading producer and director of the Broadway of the 20's and 30's. The staccato pacing of *Broadway* (1926) won him instant attention and a place on the cover of *Time* magazine. It turned the American stage from the smarmy sentimentality of *Abie's Irish Rose* to a more realistic, snappier rhythm, which culminated in his production of *The Front Page* the next year. His mournful, idyllic production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1935) is still remembered as the classic version of a classic work. As late as 1947 his production of *The Heiress* (a stage version of Henry James's *Washington Square*) was a smash hit. But people were already refusing to work with him, and by the late 50's he was unemployable. Brilliant, obnoxious, shy, a poseur, Harris ruined as many shows as he made, from stubborn pride or inability to work with his peers. His personal life was as chaotic as his professional. His many wives and strings of *shiksa* lovers, from Ruth Gordon to Judith Anderson, storm through the pages of Martin Gottfried's forcibly written lament over wasted creativity. The theater stories come thick and fast. It was, for instance, Harris who directed Katharine Hepburn in *The Lake* (1934), when Dorothy Parker penned the classic reviewer's put-down: "Miss Hepburn's performance ran the gamut from 'A' to 'B.'" The impact of his personality can be found far from Forty-Second Street. Harris was the model for the protagonist of Fred Wakeman's *The Saxon Charm* (novel and movie) and Ben Hecht's *A Jew in Love*. Lawrence Olivier modeled his characterization of Richard III on Jed Harris. "I thought of the most venal person I knew."

Gottfried never finally decides why Harris's success story ended in such miserable failure. Was it a callous Broadway's indifference to rambunctious creativity, reminiscent of Hollywood's treatment of Orson Welles? Had success come too early? Could it have been Harris's love-hate relation with his Jewish past? Harris adopted his Gentile surname after Alexander Woolcott persuaded Maxwell Anderson to give his smash *What Price Glory?* to another producer by commenting, "I have never heard of Jake Horowitz." (Woolcott was later a big fan of Harris's.) He had many Gentile lovers, but avoided Jewish women, except for one unnamed Smith undergraduate he seduced and kept on seeing on and off for most of his life. (His success with women was phenomenal. Even as a drunken bankrupt in his seventies, he could seduce and live off of an LSU graduate student half his age who was writing her dissertation on him.)

By the end of his life in 1979, he had been out of the theater for many years, having squandered his remaining credit by turning down *Stalag 17* and making a mess of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in the 50's. (Gottfried mocks the idea that "McCarthy-ism" did in the play; it was Jed Harris.) His last days in the hospital alternated between such cruelty and horrible agony that one nurse commented, "The only other patient we ever had who suffered the way Mr. Harris did was Giuseppe Gambino . . . the Mafia don." After his death, Dick Cavett devoted five shows to the interview he did with Harris. It was a fascinating mixture of important theatrical history and personal cruelty. When asked about his son with Ruth Gordon, he commented, "I don't particularly like him. . . . Having him was something she did. It was part of being an actress, having an illegitimate child by a famous director. It had nothing to do with me." cc

*E. Christian Kopff is professor of classics at the University of Colorado and an editor of* Classic Journal.

# Canned Heat

**Ernest van den Haag: *Smashing Liberal Icons: A Collection of Debates*; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC.**

When the adversaries are aggressive and the topics provocative, debates are stimulating entertainment. And, too, many vigorous minds have shared Samuel Johnson's relish for "talking for victory." But for participant and auditor alike, the excitement is in being there—in the tones and rhythms of voice, in the facial expressions, in the audience response, and in the rhetorical fireworks. Naturally, a debate is not usually the time for original thought but an occasion for forceful—perhaps witty—rehearsals of other men's mental efforts.

By all accounts, Ernest van den Haag is a very capable debater (he reportedly reduced Betty Friedan to tears in a debate at Dartmouth about feminism). There is ample evidence of his skill in these collected debates—on capitalism, on human rights, on labor unions, on pornography, and on South Africa. But as sensible as most of his points are, they are still tactical abbreviations of more complete arguments found elsewhere. And reading a debate in bare transcript is like studying a box score—it's more fun to be on the field or in the stands. cc



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## SCREEN

# Fortunately, It's 1985

*by Stephen Macaulay*

*Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Written and Directed by Michael Radford; Virgin Films.

The concept of a filmed version of *1984* wasn't without merit. After all, the timing seemed right. And when the final credits roll, we can see how precisely writer-director Michael Radford timed it. That is, a title explains that the film was shot in England in April-May 1984: the period Orwell described. If that fact is supposed to make the previous 90-odd minutes any more valuable or meaningful, then only one thing is clear: that Mr. Radford has a curious sense of fiction and reality. Was the shade of Eric Blair supposed to be hovering over the lenses while the footage was being shot?

Rubble is the key element of the film. It's seemingly everywhere. And there's rubbish where there aren't rocks. What's more, even the acting partakes of the dominant visual images. Richard Burton's final role is one that belongs in the memory hole. cc

## SOFTWARE

# Uncle Joe & the Space Invaders

*by T. L. Brink*

Now Random House offers a computer program to be used in college-level introductory sociology courses. *Social Indicators Game*, written by Robert K. Leik, *et al.*, is both a learning drill and a game, but not the arcade variety with joystick controller and sound effects.

Insert the diskette in the Apple II disk drive, turn the power on, and you are told that you have been appointed ruler of Cosmic Colony. But before you can assume the post, you must take a little course in social indicators. You are then led through some brief lessons (10-20 minutes) which show—with excellent moving graphics—how correlations work and how technological development leads to employment, productivity, better health care, and life satisfaction. After you pass the simple test at the end, you are in charge of Cosmic Colony.

The year is 2084. You watch a screen with eight social indicators: technological development, productivity, health, life expectancy, unemployment, poverty, cultural level, and social unrest. About every four seconds the screen changes, reflecting a new year, then showing with arrows how a change in one variable affects the others. Things continue in a relatively orderly sequence unless you are attacked by space invaders, or suffer a meteor shower or an epidemic of space spores (apparently random occurrences). As head of Cosmic Colony, you can adjust both expenditures and the tax rate. Then you watch the gradual changes brought about by your policy.

The first time I played the game, I was Ronald Reagan. I beefed up defense, cut social welfare programs and the tax rate. Then I sat back to watch the social indicators change: technological development went down; so did productivity, life expectancy, health, and cultural well-being. The only things to go up were poverty, unemployment, and social unrest. The game stopped in about two minutes, with the screen reporting that Cosmic Colony could not go on because technological development was too low. Why did Reaganomics fail? The authors of the program have not heard of deficit spending or the Laffer curve. You cut taxes and all expenditures are automatically reduced proportionately. Also, the authors assume that the only way to get technological development is for the government to fund it.

Then I played Walter Mondale. I cut defense, boosted social welfare projects and education, and jacked up business taxes from 20 percent to 40 percent. Everything looked good for a while: progress economically, socially, medically. But then space invaders hit, and because of the underfunding of defense, technological capacity was largely destroyed, and we had to start all over again.

Then I played Joseph Stalin. I set the business tax rate at 100 percent, the personal tax rate at 50 percent, put everything into defense, fuel procurement, and technological development. The technology and productivity were at 99 percent in a few years. Poverty and unemployment were way down, along with social unrest. Health and culture flourished. The space invaders feared to attack, but if they had, the Red Army would have pushed them out faster than you can say "Siege of Leningrad."

The instructor's manual explains the equations by which the variables change, and it was no mistake that my three different policies achieved three different results.

The computer is an excellent teacher: always patient, always accurate, frequently fun. The format of this software is appealing and designed to be an effective learning resource, but whose concepts are being taught? cc

*T. L. Brink's most recent book is* The Middle Class Credo: 1,000 All-American Beliefs *(R & E Publishers).*

## ART

# Cutting the Mustard

*by Sandra Sider*

Some 50 years ago a decree went out from Miss Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney that all of New York City and visitors thereunto should be taxed with the newest in American art, that unto



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us should be biennially given a "qualitative overview of current art activity . . . the cutting edge." The bad prose gives you a good idea of what to expect in the current Whitney Biennial, where one of the few well-staged displays can only be seen in the women's restroom. Wiser visitors contented themselves with attacking the Camembert mountain and refrained from asking, "What does it mean?" But I can eat meaningless cheese at home—which is where I should have stayed.

As might be expected in an invitational show, most of the artists are from New York. True, some of them actually reside outside the city limits, but their work already suffers from inner city attributes: farcical, outrageous, and abstract in the extreme. To add insult to injury, most of the remaining artists (shall we say contributors?) live in California. Illinois did have two contributors invited (just how large is the city of Chicago?), as did New Mexico (obviously a fluke). But what does the entire state of Texas think about having only one contributor? The same goes for Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and—this surprised me—Massachusetts. I would have thought that the Whitney crowd would have a few friends in Boston.

Which brings us to some interesting omissions, such as the apparently marginal art worlds of Atlanta, Seattle, and a few other towns that spring to my provincial mind. This show should have been called the Whitney Bicoastal Biennial.

This bicoastal bias explains the preponderance of film and video, stammering and blinking out of the void. It is disturbing when artists create cultural criticism by using the very electronic media which contribute to cultural deterioration.

Sculpture in the show suffered from too much form and too little content: wooden constructions (badly carpentered) that are an insult to trees; patently silly, mooning plaster people; aluminum atrocities that look like a stack of air-conditioning ducts. The only interesting "sculptural" piece was revealed—once I turned the corner—as a forklift truck operated by a maintenance crew.

Photography fared even worse. The trite and murky images of the Whitney photographs contrasted vividly with the photographs in another current show at the International Center of Photography. Entitled "Photographs From the Sam Wagstaff Collection at the J. Paul Getty Museum," this exhibition featured selections from the thousands of Wagstaff photographs recently purchased by the Getty Museum. The museum, which has now acquired nine private collections, is one of the few institutions where the three major influences in early photography—French, British, and American—can be studied under one roof.

The beauty of Wagstaff's photographs at ICP is exactly that—they *are* beautiful, for the most part. There are the famous pieces, such as Roger Fenton's dinosaur bones taken about 1853 at the British Museum, and Dali's eerie collage of Marilyn Monroe's face with that of Chairman Mao.

Other pieces, which project a more universal quality, provide some provocative comments on the human condition. The best known of these is probably Weegee's leggy lady with money on her mind, but a group of anonymous portraits from the turn of the century are equally effective. Art of the people, by the people, for the people—may it never perish from the earth. cc

*Sandra Sider is an art critic who writes from New York.*

## CORRESPONDENCE

# Letter From South Africa

*by Ewa M. Thompson*

I spent March 1985 in South Africa as a guest of several South African universities. I lectured to academic audiences, traveled in the rural areas of Transvaal and the Cape Province, spent a day in Soweto, visited the Crossroads slum in Cape Town and the Black township of Alexandra in Johannesburg. I talked to Black servants and Black leaders, to Afrikaners and Anglos, to people representing the three major parties: Conservative, Progressive, and Nationalist (presently in power), and to those sympathizing with the outlawed African National Congress. I formed several distinct impressions during that trip.

South Africa is about as integrated as America was in the 1950's and early 1960's. The new policy towards integration seems to be an ongoing concern of the Botha government. Buses, airplanes, and shopping centers are integrated, and so are major universities and most private schools on the primary and secondary level. Better restaurants and snack bars are integrated, medium-level restaurants are integrated in Cape Town but not in Johannesburg. Trains and government-run schools are not. Virtually all those with whom I discussed the subject felt that South Africa is in a state of change and that integration of all public facilities is only a matter of time, as is the abolition of laws prohibiting mixed marriages. The whites grumble about but accept the huge increases in their tax levels caused by Botha's policy of upgrading Black education.



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The goal of the Botha government, it appears, is the creation of a meritocracy without regard to race. The old apartheid model of Malan and Verwoerd, in which the races would be separated geographically, has been replaced by a plan for a kind of federalism between the four major interest groups: white, Asian, Colored, and Black. According to the Botha model, as the level of productivity of the three other groups increases relative to that of the whites, their political influence will also rise. Thus Botha's plan for change in South Africa should be viewed in economic rather than racial terms. Already, entry-level salaries in such jobs as high school education are determined by colorblind competitive examination. However, any notion of "one man, one vote" in the foreseeable future is regarded as a blueprint for an overnight transfer of wealth from the haves to the have-nots, which would "kill the goose that laid the golden egg."

South African tribal life escapes the attention of the American media, partly because most of us in America have long lost our tribal dimension and replaced it with an awareness of nationality. In South Africa, the three largest tribes are the Zulus (5.4 million), the Northern and Southern Sothos (4 million), and the Xhosas (3 million). There exist a dozen or so lesser tribes. Their members' loyalty to tribal law generally surpasses their awareness of the social and legal structures of the state in which they live. But tribal wisdom provides little preparation for participation in a technological society.

When a tribal culture confronts a Western society, the signals get confused. The fiction of a unified Black society which such leaders as Bishop Tutu present to the world was shattered for me during several conversations with the Zulus in Transvaal. Virtually all of them acknowledged their tribal chieftain as their supreme authority. One prominent Zulu businessman told me that the Black majority rule would certainly (and quite rightly, in his view) mean dictatorship of the Zulus over the other tribes. Finally, the difference between Blacks and Coloreds in South Africa has to do not so much with skin color as with tribalism. The Coloreds do not have tribal allegiance whereas the Blacks do. In this respect, as well as many others, American Blacks are closer to the South African Coloreds than to the Blacks. This business of tribal customs and habits has to be faced squarely if improvement, rather than disaster, is to occur in South Africa.

Disinvestment is the number one conversation topic in South Africa. During a conversation, president of the Soweto College of Education showed me some buildings on campus and said that they were donated by IBM. As I toured Soweto, I was told by several Blacks that this or that block of one-family homes was donated by an American company in partnership with the South African government or with the municipal government. For Black South Africans, disinvestment would mean not only a loss of jobs and housing prospects but also a step backward in education and community services. Many Black tribal leaders oppose disinvestment for these reasons. Even those Blacks who favor disinvestment admit that it would cause suffering.

Next to the issue of tribalism, terrorism is the least appreciated element of South African politics. It is directed against members of Black community councils, church leaders, and businessmen, and it will most likely be directed against those Blacks who will participate in the multiracial regional councils whose creation was recently announced by President Botha. For example: in March, a Black town councillor, his two sons, and two of his employees were killed and their bodies hacked to pieces before being set alight in full public view. This event received virtually no publicity outside South Africa. The minority of South Africans dedicated to violence have done a good job of preventing Blacks and whites from cooperating with one another. Terrorism is on the rise, and the government, intimidated by criticism from abroad, seems unable to deal with it.

On March 12, I went to the infamous Soweto. I drove around the city for several hours and saw every major thoroughfare and hundreds of small streets and took some snapshots of the elegant home in which Bishop Tutu used to live before becoming Bishop of Johannesburg. Soweto's population is about two million. It is 5 percent slum, 5 percent upper-middle class, and 90 percent tiny red brick houses which would fit right into a lower-middle-class American neighborhood

*In the forthcoming issue of* Chronicles of Culture:

## *The Natural Man*

"The best available land-community, the ideal that we may reasonably hold in view, is one that lives up to the occasional (though inconsistent) demand of ecologists for variety: a diverse and variegated landscape is one that allows as many creatures as possible their time in the sun. Such a land-community is not to be valued solely because it is, in a sense, more 'stable,' nor because it is (to us) more aesthetically pleasing, but for the same reason that a liberal democracy is valued, as allowing as many possible to live out their lives, not as slaves or material for another's purposes."

—from "Rights of the Wild and Tame"
by Stephen R. L. Clark

ALSO

Allan Carlson discovers the spectre haunting Europe, is Thomas Malthus
Jay Mechling surveys the rise of animal liberation
Tibor Machan attacks the idea of animal rights



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in a factory town. It is dull-looking, and by American standards it has startlingly few shops and recreation areas. But by the standards of Africa's Marxist countries, it is the fulfillment of a dream: the dream of having running water and electricity, a sturdy roof over one's head, and enough food to fend off hunger.

The Crossroads slum near Cape Town is different. It consists of several square kilometers of slumlike dwellings which house an unknown number of people, many of them illegal immigrants from the Black homelands in the north. They come by bus. Life in the slum is preferable to life in the wild where hunting and subsistence agriculture are the only sources of food. Unlike Soviet authorities, who rigidly control their borders and their people, the South African government is unable to control the influx. Yet on balance, I have seen a higher incidence of malnutrition among children in Eastern Europe than in South Africa.

The lack of an organized multiracial intellectual right may be South Africa's most pressing problem. As things stand now, advocates of evolutionary change wax apologetic whereas advocates of violent change sound triumphant. They have mastered the art of persuasion and have created a network for disseminating their extravagant promises. The power of the left in South African universities is formidable. Conservative professors are hard to find. Whereas the pro-Marxist NUSAS operates openly and with impunity on campus, several university students were recently heavily fined for distributing a conservative newsletter. The silent majority, both white and Black, has condoned verbal terrorism of the left through its intellectual indolence.

The choice for South Africa is either to build economic structures and channels of communication between the tribal and poorly educated Blacks and the white, Asian, and (to some extent) Colored minorities, or to opt for the "one man, one vote, one time" solution, which was the choice of South Africa's neighbors to the north. In a rational world, one might hope that Botha's plan for a meritocracy in South Africa would be allowed to work. Certainly it holds out the most promise for each of the racial groups in the country. The Reagan Administration apparently understands and is trying hard to support Botha, within the limits allowed by pressures in the United States Congress and the media. If Reagan has his way, disinvestment will not happen.

Still, I would be surprised if Moscow's policy to isolate South Africa were not ultimately successful. In the short term, this would bring the old pro-apartheid faction into power in Pretoria and create a siege mentality in the minds of the South African whites. In the long term, the flight of Anglos from South Africa would destroy the economy and the government. This would give the anti-Western forces a monopoly on some dozen essential strategic metals and would insure the failure of the increasingly successful Unita revolt (supported by South Africa) against the Angolan Marxists. So the long-term (i.e., 10-year) prognosis for South Africa must be termed poor. This prognosis may be reversed if several things happen concurrently: (1) the pro-Botha attitude of the Reagan Administration is maintained into the next Presidency; (2) Botha and his successors show more determined leadership and steadiness of purpose in the future; (3) white emigration from South Africa remains at low levels. For the sake of South Africans of all races and for the sake of the West, I hope that the policies of the Botha government will be given a chance. It would be an enormous disaster if Moscow succeeded in turning the entire African continent into a hell of genocide and famine. cc

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## CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

***Heroes are back in style.*** According to a recent poll, the approval ratings given to the objects of our admiration are up significantly from a few years back. The official story goes something like this: back in the bad old days of Vietnam and Watergate, the American people lost their youthful idealism and learned to distrust all figures of authority. Now, five years into the Reagan era, we have regained enough of our confidence to be able to invest some of it into the heroes of the 80's.

Perhaps it is so. It is possible that most of us were losing heart in the 1960's. Not everyone remembers the decade of the apocalypse as a time of doubt and cynicism. It was, after all, a time when entertainers like Jim Morrison were deified for acts of obscenity. (You still can't go into a state university men's room without seeing *Jim Morrison Lives!* scratched into the fresh paint.) Bob Dylan, the Stones, and the Beatles were treated as prophets, and radical groups like SDS had all the aura of crusaders on their way to the Holy Land (and most of them behaved about as well as the participants in the Fourth Crusade). The Weathermen, the Panthers, the Red Guard . . . Janis, Jimi, and Mama Cass . . . Woodstock, the Chicago Convention. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/ But to be young was very Heaven!" At least, if you listen to National Public Radio, which commemorates every anniversary of Watergate, Vietnam, etc., like so many saints' days.



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The difference between the 60's and 80's does not lie in the intensity of our hero worship but in our unanimity. *Then*, one part of the population admired Richard Nixon (or George Wallace), while the other worshiped John Lennon. *Now*, a significant percentage is agreed upon Ronald Reagan, Jane Fonda, John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Clint Eastwood, and about 15 actors and athletes, not all of whose names will be familiar to anyone over 35. With the exception of the religious leaders and the President, the rest are in the entertainment business. Our heroes have always been cowboys. So, it is not entirely inappropriate that the stars of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and *The Santa Fe Trail* should come high on the list, but it does seem strange that the national symbols which serve to bind the nation together should nearly all turn out to be people paid to entertain us.

Eastwood is a good case in point. The real Clint Eastwood certainly deserves our respect: a hardworking actor, a creative director, a successful businessman who has done his best to support old-fashioned American ideals, to the point of financing an attempt to rescue MIA's in Vietnam. But, if we can trust the opinion surveys, it is not Clint Eastwood but Dirty Harry that has won the hearts and minds of the American people. To some extent, even the popularity of the President and the Pope depends on the frequent appearances of their videotaped images on the evening news.

When did it all start, this adoration of jocks and talking heads? In the 19th century, Americans had a healthy contempt for show people. Even at their best, they were suspicious characters. (Members of the older generation have assured me that as recently as the 30's a man of Richard Burton's character would not have been let into the country.) Our heroes then were warriors like George Washington, Lighthorse Harry Lee and his youngest son, Robert; frontiersmen like Boone and Crockett; statesmen and orators like Adams and Jefferson, Calhoun and Webster, Lincoln and Davis. The prominence of players in American life is reminiscent of the days of Nero and Commodus. When did we sink to the level of lionizing the trained seals who can throw a ball or bark in tune?

Like so many bad things in American life, it seems to have started about the time of World War I or a little later. It's true, we still had our real heroes in the 20's—Black Jack Pershing, Lucky Lindy, and the aging William Jennings Bryan—but increasingly the newspapers (and newsreels and radio) were filled with the exploits of Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Even more than professional sports, Hollywood came to occupy the unwholesome attention of a people increasingly unsure of who they were. Whatever is said in books in praise of the 20's and 30's must be balanced by the recognition that large numbers of Americans lost faith in their own culture and traditions and bought the degraded products of mass culture: the flimsy eroticism of Tin Pan Alley songs and swing bands, the wisdom of wisecracking radio comics, and the epic sagas of the silver screen. It was the era of Scott Fitzgerald and *his* most memorable hero, Jay Gatsby—the rootless stockjobber with a hankering for old American gentility.

In defense of that generation it must be said that they often paid the tribute vice owes to virtue. The stars felt compelled to go through the charade of marriage and divorce and remarriage, instead of just "sleeping around." Sports heroes at least played at being real men in public, whatever their private lives might have been like. When the war came, athletes and actors alike—many of them, at any rate—enlisted. Clark Gable and Jimmy Stewart both flew combat missions and found themselves actually living the sort of parts they had once only played at. Many of those who did not fight made propaganda films or entertained the troops—our troops, it must be said, and not the enemy's. In this respect, Henry Fonda had a great advantage over daughter Jane.

The editors of the new *U.S. News & World Report* (it is now owned by the *Atlantic/New Republic*) cannot be blamed for their enthusiasm for the return of the American hero. It is a revival which has been made possible by the arbiters of mass culture at Paramount, CBS, *Time*, and the mass circulation oracles of high culture. But popular culture has a way of being genuinely *popular*. Although it might have shocked our grandparents, the fact is that we have turned to a film actor for our best President in 30 years and one of the strongest candidates to succeed him is a member of the Football Hall of Fame. cc

***"The new vaudeville"*** is the latest movement in the theater. The promoters of this new development are trying, in the words of *American Theatre*, to "cross boundaries that separate dance, theatre, music, and visual art" by infusing "highly disciplined physical technique" with "an irrepressible spirit of comic anarchy." Representative is a recent production of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* featuring "a unicyclist, a belly dancer, a baton twirler, a trapeze artist and a slack-wire clown." They seem to have got the *Errors* part down pat, but the *Comedy* was a little harder to manage. Still, they are doing their best to perpetuate "the bard," if only as the act that killed vaudeville. cc

***A Black revolution has erupted*** in Queens. Riders on an F Train were recently witnesses to a marvelous display of Black power. According to *Christianity and Crisis*:

> The riders, mostly white, were visibly irritated by a black youth carrying a large radio playing at top volume. Side glances, muttering, and exasperated rustling of newspapers did not seem to get through to him. Of course, no one felt able to do the obvious and ask him to turn down the radio. That was asking for trouble. Enters at the next stop a well-dressed, middle-aged black man carrying a briefcase. He walks up to the young man and says what all the passengers have been dying to say: 'Please turn down your radio.' The young man refuses: 'Hey man, this is a free country.' 'So it is,' replies the older man, who then grabs the radio and throws it out an open window of the moving train. cc



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# Friends of the Family

*(continued from page 5)*

at rearing responsible citizens; others do not. Just what are we going to do about this prime cause of inequality?

There is only one answer: take responsibility away from the family and give it to the government. This transfer of power from the family to the state is not a new process. To some extent, it has been going on throughout recorded history, but the pace has been accelerating dramatically in the past 150 years. In most older and simpler societies, the family is virtually autonomous, a self-governing kingdom in miniature. It is completely responsible for the health and welfare of its members: it maintains order, educates children, and provides social security. Government, where it exists, is largely an affair between families; there were few cracks in the family structure into which the authorities could insert their legal tentacles.

The common law tradition of England and the United States preserved much of the family's independence. Marriage made a man and wife to be "of one flesh," a legal unity. Not only was divorce virtually out of the question,

but a wife's property and income were under her husband's control. On the other hand, a man could be held liable for certain crimes committed by his wife. There was no point in giving women the vote because it was the undivided family that voted, in the person of the male head of the house. The ideal family was more than a unit of residence and consumption. It was an organic whole in which the members worked and played together, provided together for the common security, lived and died—together.

The older family was a force to be reckoned with, even by the ambitious empires of the ancient and modern world. Even where several generations did not actually live together, there was a unity of kin and a sense of privacy (not individual but family privacy) which resisted the power of the state. There was only so much a government could do to intrude upon household affairs. As a result, the most powerful rulers of the past, Oliver Cromwell or Louis XIV, could proceed only a little way down the road to total government. At every turn were the ancient privileges of the autonomous family.

Since the middle of the 19th century, a social revolution has shattered the power and unity of the family. Divorce, made increasingly easy by progressive legislatures, coupled with women's suffrage, succeeded in dividing the one flesh into competing individuals. Compulsory schooling and the kind attentions of social workers (to say nothing of the newly discovered children's rights) have established children as something like potential wards of the state, entrusted to their families on condition of good behavior. Tax policies and affirmative-action laws have the effect of making it more attractive for mothers to work outside the home and surrender their children to government-regulated day-care centers. We have not yet reached the fun-house conditions of Sweden, where parents who spank their children may face imprisonment, but we are fast approaching. With Dodd's help, we can get there all the faster.

A government campaign to save the family can only lead to more government intervention, if only because that is the nature of government. The libertarians know that much. But at a deeper level, libertarians and leftists share certain ethical assumptions which have contributed, more than anything else, to the erosion of the modern family. These assumptions, around which we have structured most of our social policies, have to do with the equality of individuals. Society is, we are told over and over, made up of individuals. Fairness demands that each individual have a roughly equal chance to succeed in life. This means that our citizens should enjoy not only equality before the law, but also an equal right to participate in the political and economic life of the nation. Circumstances of birth—race, religion, and social position—must not be allowed to play a dominant role in deciding who gets what—whether that "what" is a legal judgment, a political office, or a job.

The liberal position (that is the technical term) is usually summed up in the phrase "equal opportunity." More restrained advocates of liberalism, who usually go by the name of conservatives, say they are in favor of equality of opportunity, but not of results. The government can only guarantee us the chance to compete in the race on equal terms; it cannot ensure that everyone will be a winner. Stronger advocates of liberalism quite correctly point out the naiveté of this argument. Children of affluent, intelligent, and hardworking parents begin life with distinct advantages over the underprivileged, including perhaps higher intelligence, better health, superior education, a powerful network of family friends, and even those ethical values which make for success in the world. How is it possible to so improve the opportunities for a child of a one-parent family in a Chicago housing project to such an extent that they will be equal to the advantages enjoyed by the children of a churchgoing architect in Evanston?

The only possible solution lies in massive government intervention: programs designed to lift the children of the poor out of their bad environments and subject them to the



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elevating influences of white, middle-class America. If this means taking them away from families and neighbors or violating all the Constitutional protections of due process, well, the poor—despite all the groups that presume to speak for them—have never had much power. But it is not just poor families who are threatened. The goal of a homogeneous society of equal individuals will require sacrifices from the well-to-do.

Consider the unfair advantages of a private education. Although the average income of families with children in private and religious schools is less than $30,000 per annum, there is no doubt about the benefits of a safe and disciplined environment in which learning is encouraged. As long ago as the 1930's, John Dewey's disciples at Columbia were contemplating the feasibility of outlawing private schools as an obstacle to social reform. (Why should the children of the rich grow up unscathed by progressive social engineering?) Religion is another problem area. Orthodox Jews, Southern Baptists, conservative Catholics, and Mormons all believe in the superior merits of their own faith. What is worse, they hold decidedly unprogressive attitudes toward sex and sexual equality. At the end of the 1970's, the Carter Administration's Year of the Child spawned a number of state and local legislative initiatives, like the one in North Carolina that provided for "aggressive outreach" into families that did not provide a wholesome (i.e., liberated) sexual and religious environment.

It is easy enough to dredge up scare stories from the newspapers, which make it clear that the burden of proof is shifting from government to parents in cases where a child's welfare is in question. Recent events in Scott County, Minnesota, are chilling enough. On the testimony of a revenge-seeking child molester, 24 adults were charged with sexual abuse of children, and 25 children were taken from their families and placed in foster homes. The case for the prosecution eventually fell apart on charges of secret murders. The zealous county attorney, Kathleen Morris, apparently still believes in her theory of murder and sexual abuse. Even though all charges have been dismissed, some of the children have yet to be returned. According to observers, the case was so bungled we shall never know the truth of it. But the fact remains that on the assumption of guilt the children were removed, and in the absence of charges they are still withheld from their parents.

If America does walk down the road of a national family policy, it will not be the first to take that step. The Swedish experience is rather well-known. Less familiar, perhaps, are the efforts of the Soviet government to bring the family to heel. In the first blush of revolutionary fervor, party members experimented with sexual freedom and "alternate life-styles," but eventually reality fell upon them with all the dismal inevitability of the Russian winter: someone was going to have to bear and rear the next generation of little revolutionaries. On the other hand, the endless series of five-year plans required more busy hands than the male half of the population could supply.

Stalin's solution was as brilliant as it was simple: let the women work *and* keep house. Not that they were also taking care of their children. With state schools, state day care, and mandatory state summer camps, the children spend just enough time with their parents to be able to inform on them. The Soviet ideal is of a proletarianized family in the service of the state. While the older, multigenerational Russian family was an effective resistance force against government oppression, the new-model Russian family is designed, as one scholar expressed it, as a "training-ground for submission." It is not too much to see a connection between the dissolution of family life and the high rates of alcoholism, abortion, and infertility in the Soviet Union.

The dream of social equality leads—inevitably, it seems—to the tyranny of the total state. For many writers on ethics, notably John Rawls, this poses only a minor problem: social justice must take precedence over any form of social structure. Better to eliminate the family than give up the struggle for equality. Other liberals are not so sure. James Fishkin at Yale finds himself driven to accept a more "limited liberalism," because the requirements of equality seem irreconcilable with family autonomy:

> Attempting to maintain . . . the principle of merit, equality of life chances, and the autonomy of the family would be like attempting to hold up a three-cornered stool when only two legs are available. No matter which two corners one chooses to hold up, lack of the third is enough to undermine the whole structure.

Fishkin is willing to rest content with a social and ethical system with these built-in contradictions, but isn't it possible that the system is itself wrongheaded, that the dream of equality is actually a nightmare of compounded egocentric individualism and state tyranny? *By their fruits ye shall know them*, and the fruits of a national family policy—of the sort envisioned by sentimental old Pat Moynihan and smiling young Chris Dodd—have already fallen rotten from the tree in Sweden and the Soviet Union.

The basic mistake that underlies all our thinking about equality is to regard society as made up of individuals. It does not require the uniform testimony of social anthropologists to refute this assumption—dear to libertarians and Marxists alike—it is contradicted by our own experience every day. We are born into families that form us into social beings; we grow up impelled to replicate the family patterns of our childhood. What is more, most of us are incapable of being alone for more than a few hours at a time. Creatures who could do without the society of their fellows would have to be, as Aristotle observed, either divine or subhuman. In isolation most of us would fare no better than poor old Ben Gunn marooned on Treasure Island.

If our very humanness depends on belonging to a family and a community, then those basic facts of our humanity must take precedence over such merely theoretical concerns as liberty, equality, and social justice. Not that we can afford to ignore ethical considerations, either in our private lives or in our public policies, but they are of a lower order of priority. Pursuing social justice at the expense of the family would be like pursuing beauty at the expense of life: there can be no human beauty in death and corruption; and there can be no social justice, much less equality, when the family is decayed into an administrative unit of the total state.

—*Thomas J. Fleming*



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